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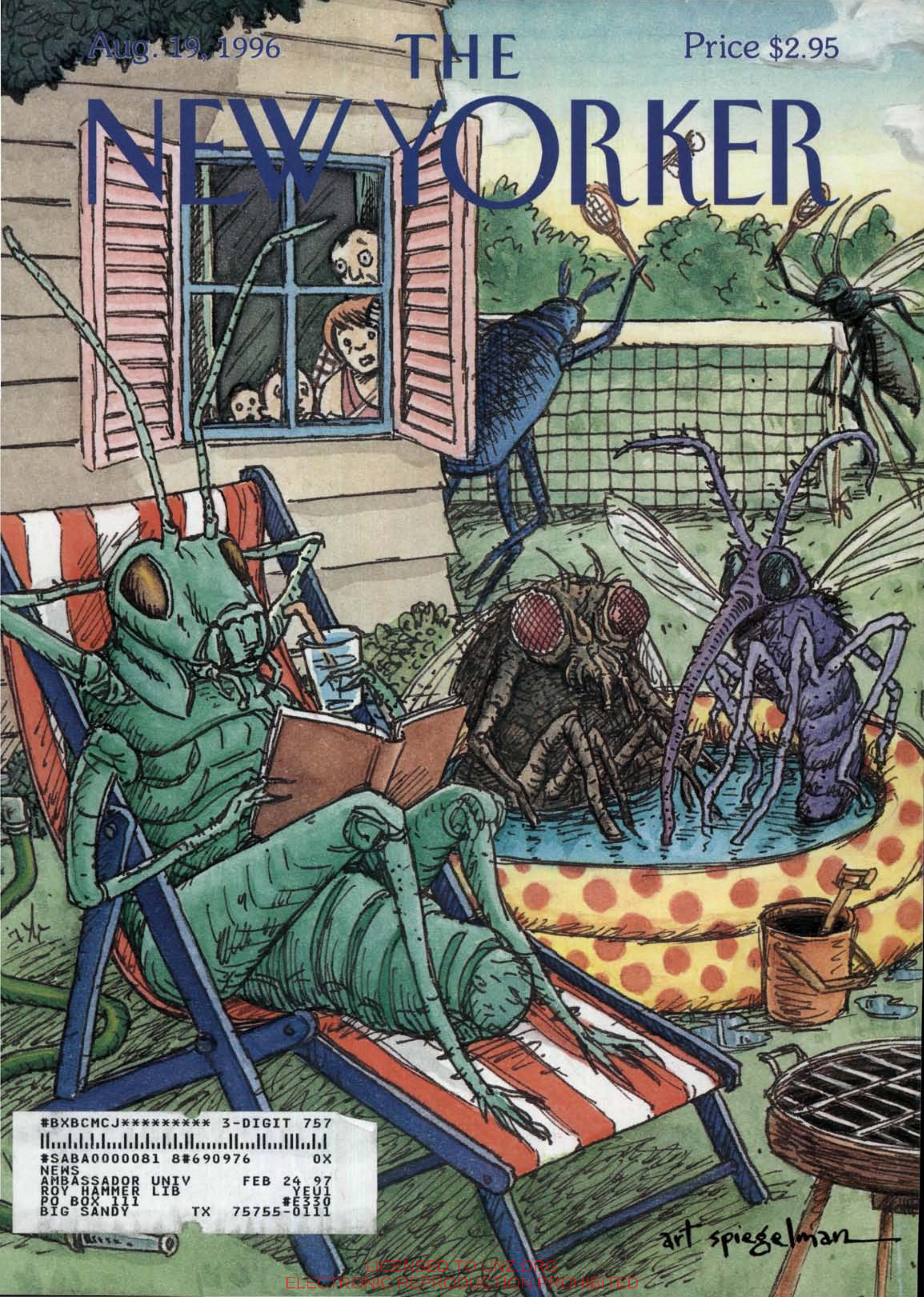

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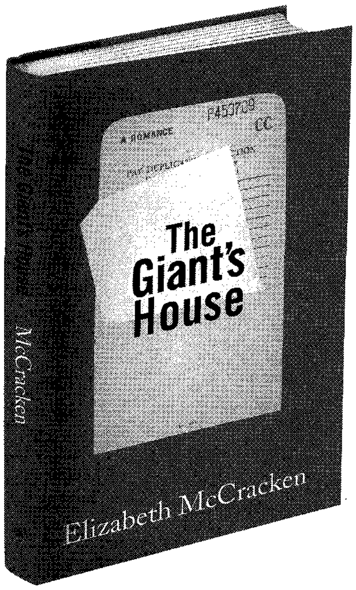

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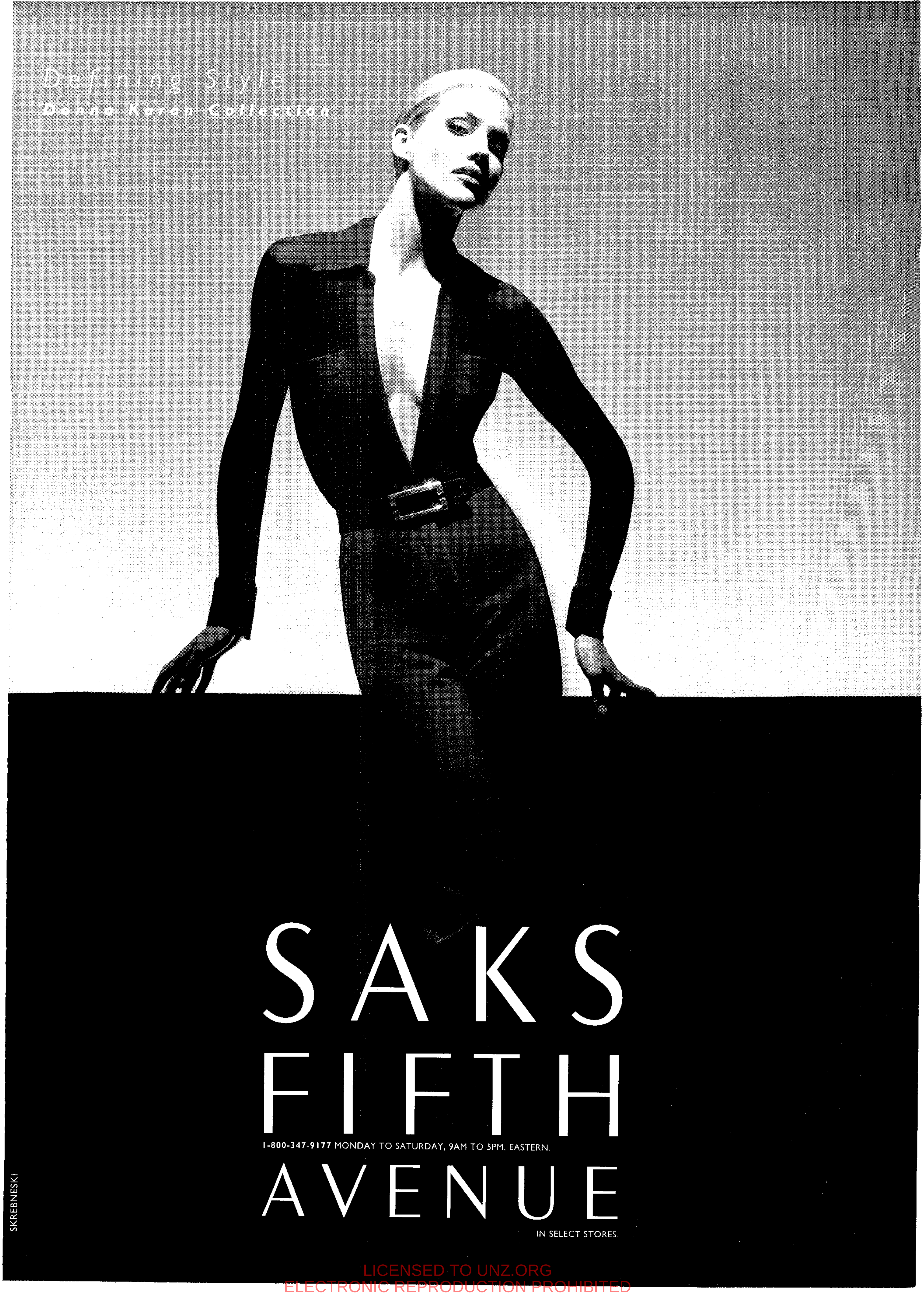

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A MESSAGE FROM MARS

Are you listening, Republicans and Democrats?

ON August 20, 1757, a twenty-year-old English seaman named Tom Pain stepped onto the Dartmouth docks carrying thirty pounds in cash, his share of the loot captured by the privateer King of Prussia on its final voyage, and set out for London to establish a career for himself. He had thoughts of writing poetry—a pursuit he decided to abandon, he later told his friend William Blake, "as leading too much into the field of imagination." Instead, he emerged as Thomas Paine, the peerless pamphleteer whose fiery prose helped ignite the American Revolution.

The men who inspired Paine's conversion to political writing were not priests or philosophers, or even visionaries like Blake. They were what we today would call scientists. In London, Paine befriended two of them particularly—Benjamin Martin, a mathematician and optician, and James Ferguson, who had learned the constellations as a shepherd boy in Scotland, taught himself to read, and gone on to write enormously popular books on astronomy. From them Paine absorbed a subversive doctrine that had been leaching into Western thought since the days of Copernicus and Galileo and was soon to be taken up by Ferguson's friend Benjamin Franklin, by Thomas Jefferson, and by other prominent Americans: that through science a thoughtful, industrious individual could find his own way in the world, without either the aid or the hindrance of kings and priests.

Paine's scientific friends were fascinated by globes—they made and sold globes, and lectured on Newtonian physics in a hall in the Strand called the Globe—and they incited Paine to think of globes in the plural, of our world as one among many. "The natural bent of my mind was to science," Paine recalled. "As soon as I was able, I purchased a pair of globes." Paine's intellect extrapolated the pair of globes to millions, and thereafter his writings on liberty were frequently intertwined with speculations about the "plurality of worlds." Whole sections of Paine's "The Age of Reason" read like modern-day science writing. In "the immensity of space," he argued, "there is room for millions of worlds as large or larger than ours, and each of them millions of miles apart from each other." He found this prospect pregnant with the potential for learning. "It is not to us, the inhabitants of this globe, only, that the benefits arising from a plurality of worlds are limited," he wrote. "The inhabitants of each of the worlds of which our system is composed enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do."

Last week, the inhabitants of this globe were presented with a new opportunity of knowledge, when a team of ten NASA scientists announced the discovery of what may be fossils of Martian life forms.

THE NEW YORKER, 20 WEST 43RD STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036. Thomas A. Florio, president; Pamela Maffei McCarthy, senior vice-president/deputy editor; Diane M. Silberstein, senior vice-president/publisher; Pamela H. Older, vice-president/manufacturing director; Peter Armour, vice-president/circulation director; Rhonda Pinzer Sherman, vice-president/special-projects director; Maurie Perl, vice-president/public-relations director; Robert A. Silverstone, vice-president/business manager; Richard Levine, vice-president/human-resources director; Jonathan Marder, vice-president/special marketing; Carmen Lopez, associate publisher; Cindy Schreibman, creative services director; Marie Wolpert, marketing director. THE NEW YORKER is not responsible for the return or loss of submissions, or for any damage or other injury to unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. Any submission of a manuscript or artwork must be accompanied by a self-addressed envelope of appropriate size, bearing adequate return postage. The magazine does not consider unsolicited photographs or transparencies. © 1996 by *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of THE NEW YORKER. The periodical's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are registered trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc., published through its division *The New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

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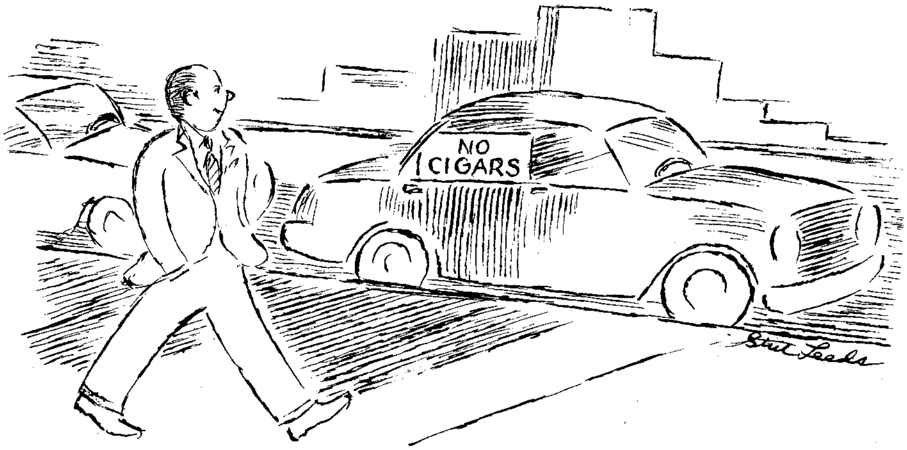
These curious-looking structures, so tiny that a million of them could fit on a pinpoint, were examined by electron microscope in the heart of a blood-brown meteorite. They are thought to date back almost four billion years, to a time when Mars was a relatively balmy planet with rivers, lakes, and a robust atmosphere. About sixteen million years ago, the rock was blasted into space, probably by an asteroid impact. It fell to Earth thirteen thousand years ago, and was found in 1984, in an Antarctic ice field. It is by far the oldest of twelve chunks of Mars that have been collected on Earth, their place of origin having been lately identified through comparison of their composition with that of Martian soil and atmospheric gases analyzed by the two Viking landers in the nineteen-seventies.

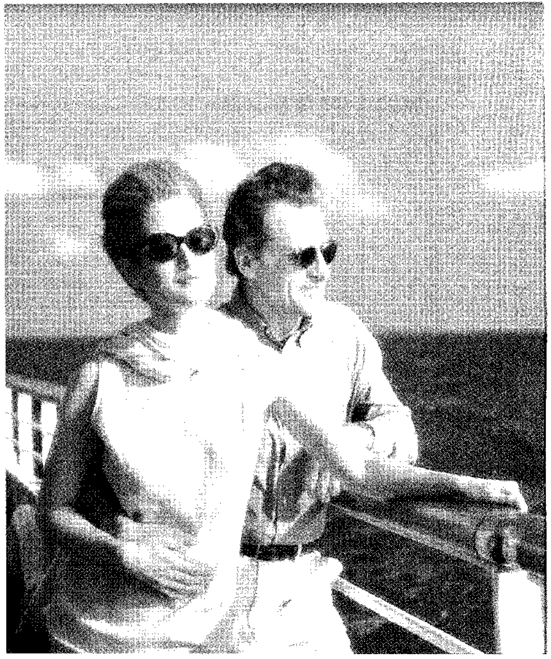
If closer examination confirms that the meteorite really does contain fossils, provocative questions will arise. One is whether there is still life on Mars—perhaps hunkered down below the planet's now arid, rusty-red surface, where it might be dug up in a core sample and returned to Earth for study. Another is whether life, far from being a singular miracle, may in fact be the routine consequence of certain planetary conditions—conditions that there is rapidly increasing reason to believe are as common in the universe as streams and meadows are on Earth.

To be sure, a DOMB (dead old Martian bacterium) isn't the same as a bald humanoid with pointy ears saying "Take me to your leader." But many biologists would argue that the evolutionary jump from rocks to bacteria is at least as great as the jump from bacteria to people. And if it should turn out that there has been life on Mars—life on two neighboring planets in one system—the likelihood would seem strong that Paine and his friends were right, and life is abundant in the universe. The thought is both exhilarating and unsettling—a familiar cocktail of emotions for the inhabitants of the democratic societies, whose founding, inspired by science, has exacted its price in traditional values.

In the upcoming Republican and Democratic National Conventions, we are likely to hear a lot about how religious values are central to our society. And so they are. But it is worth remembering that Jefferson and Paine, and George Washington, too, were deists: they believed that God created the universe, but denied that He works miracles or concerns Himself with answering prayers. The universe, not the Bible, they maintained, was the book of which God was the Author—and thus the book to be studied for clues to His nature. They held, in other words, religious views that today would bar almost any candidate who frankly admitted them from election to the Presidency. Paine saw little room for compromise between science and revealed religion. "To believe that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous," he wrote, "and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air."

If, as we often hear, we Americans have lost our way, one reason may be that we have forgotten our origins. Our comfort may have come from the Bible, but our liberty came from science. Freedom released us like a whirled stone on an unhanded tether, and we have been flying ever since into an innovative and unknown future. Our creativity and our future are now one, our fate less certain than that of any wayward meteor. In charting the journey, no Bible will suffice. We need also to follow the example of Paine, who saw the way to universal liberty, he said, "after I had made myself master of the use of the globes, and of the orrery, and conceived an idea of the infinity of space." —TIMOTHY FERRIS





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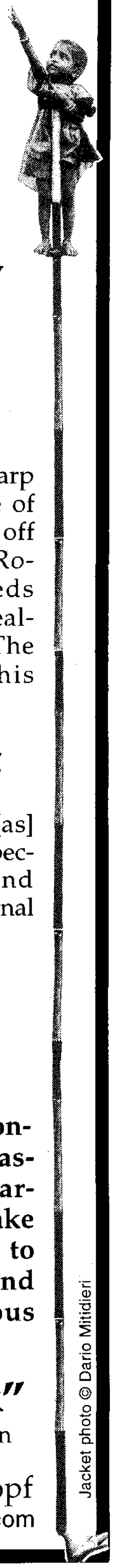

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IN THE MAIL

CULTURAL WASTELAND

Reading David Denby's essay on popular culture ("Buried Alive," July 15th), I was reminded of our son, Sean, who was born autistic. Thirty years ago, very little was known about autism, and the overwhelming force of Sean's disorder threatened to pull him away from us forever. But Sean has recovered, and part of that recovery was certainly due to our aggressive struggle to hold on to him. We never stopped talking to him—year in and year out for more than twenty years—no matter how many times he repeated certain behavior patterns or asked the same questions. We screamed, we made demands, and we did anything and everything we could to keep Sean in our world. Somehow, it worked.

It struck me that the pervasive pull of pop culture somewhat resembles autism: it too threatens to overwhelm and swallow up our children. You can't be polite in the face of so formidable a foe. We weren't, and we won.

RON BARRON
New York City

If Mr. Denby thinks his son would be better off not watching so much TV, then he shouldn't let him. Instead, he worries about "bullying" and being a hypocrite, since he himself watches TV. Nonsense! Denby may drive a car, have sex, and drink like a fish, yet (one hopes) he doesn't allow his thirteen-year-old to do any of these things. That's not "bullying," it's "parenting." There's a third option: "spoiling." Merchandisers of pop culture thrive on it.

PETER SELGIN
New York City

TRIBAL POLITICS

Jeffrey Toobin's assertion that Laurence Tribe probably killed his own chances to be on the Supreme Court ("Supreme Sacrifice," July 8th) by testifying against Robert H. Bork at the latter's confirmation hearings is correct for the wrong reasons. Toobin sees conservative revenge for "borking" as the kiss of death to Tribe. More likely, Tribe's position that a brilliant jurist of unquestioned integrity should be rejected by the Senate for the content of his constitutional ideas has made Tribe and other original thinkers unconfirmable. The degree of attention the Senate should pay to a nominee's philosophy is much debated by scholars, but in the political arena the aftermath of the original borking could hardly be subtle. Clarence Thomas, who testified that he never expressed an opinion on Roe v. Wade, passed muster; Tribe will not.

PETER LUSHING
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law
New York City

FAITHFUL COMPANION

Marjorie Garber's "Dog Days" (A Critic at Large, July 8th), on man's best friend, made me think of the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus. When Linnaeus lived at a manor, called Hammarby, he regularly attended the parish church of Danmark, near Uppsala, in the company of his dog Pompe. Faithful Pompe also attended Sunday services of his own accord when his master was ill. The botanist himself had little patience with lengthy sermons, and so Pompe would recognize when the usual hour was up and depart in a timely fashion on his own, regardless of whether or not the service had ended.

ANN MILLER MCANDREW
Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich.

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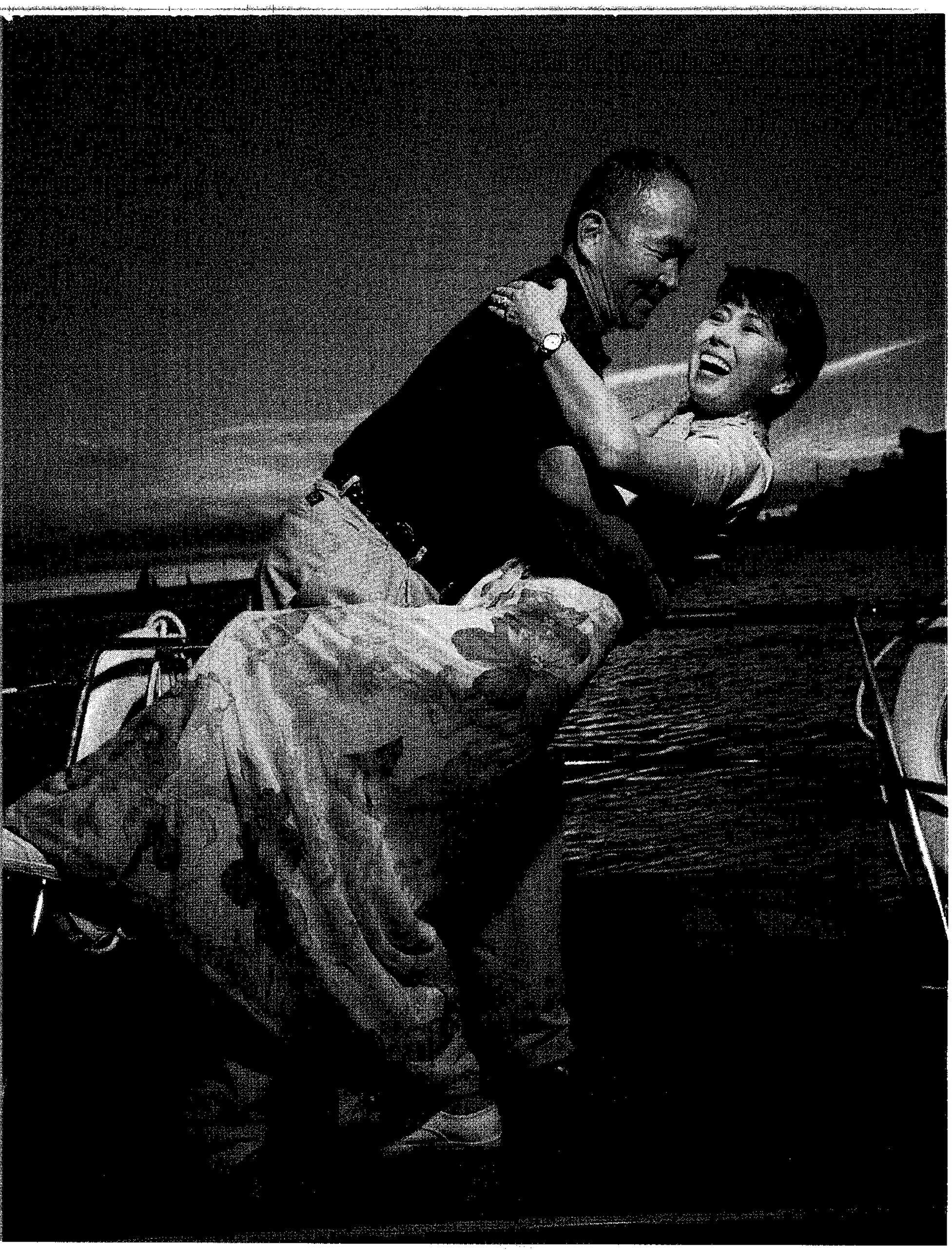

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—A cast of five performs more than fifteen musical numbers in a new revue conceived by lyricist and director Mark Waldrop and the late costume designer Howard Crabtree. Music by Dick Gallagher. Opens Aug. 14 at 7. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Hughie—Al Pacino stars as the blowhard gambler Erie Smith, in his own staging of Eugene O'Neill's 1941 drama. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Keats—Austin Pendleton, in a one-man drama set during the young poet's final days in Rome, where he died of tuberculosis in 1821. Opens Aug. 14 at 8 and continues through Aug. 31. (Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 925-8645.)

Old Wicked Songs—Jon Marans' play, which had its première last November at Playhouse 91, about a jaded young pianist studying in Vienna (Justin Kirk) and the older Viennese music professor (Hal Robinson) who transforms his outlook. Previews begin Aug. 16. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

O Wholly Night and Other Jewish Solecisms—A new one-woman play written and performed by Deb Margolin, in which a woman not unlike the playwright awaits the Messiah. Directed by Margot Lewitin. Preview on Aug. 14. Opens Aug. 15 at 8. (Interart, 549 W. 52nd St. 279-4200.)

Summer and Smoke—Mary McDonnell portrays the lonely spinster Alma Winemiller and Harry Hamlin the man she loves, in the Roundabout Theatre Company's production of Tennessee Williams's 1948 drama. David Warren is the director. Previews begin Aug. 16. (Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Timon of Athens—Michael Cumpsty has the title role in the New York Shakespeare Festival's second summer production, directed by Brian Kulick. In previews through Aug. 17. Opens Aug. 18 at 8. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750.)

OPENED RECENTLY

American Style—Paul Boocock and David Latham have been performing together for three years as Premium Bob, the kind of aggressively intelligent and truly weird act you might have spotted on Letterman in the early eighties. In their new show, they forge a hilarious evening out of elements as incongruous as a writer obsessed with imagining the thoughts of the young Martin Luther and the American public's fascination with cosmetic depilation. Thursdays at 8 and 10:30, through Aug. 15. (Workhouse, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 431-9220.)

Big—This adaptation of the movie that starred Tom Hanks provides little joy, though Daniel Jenkins, as the twelve-year-old in a grown-up's body, is sweet and likable. Directed by Mike Ockrent. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/27/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Born to Sing!—Singers Lisa Fischer, Tanya Blount, and Stacy Francis, in a new R. & B.-and-gospel musical, with book and lyrics by Vy Higginsen and Ken Wydro. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

The Boys in the Band—James Lecesne, as the swishy Emory, and David Greenspan, as the lethal Harold, have a field day in Mart Crowley's 1968 study of gay self-hatred. The script no longer seems particularly shocking (except in its viciousness) or politically suspect, but it holds up soundly in this impressive revival, which was supervised by the playwright and directed with buckets of bile by Kenneth Elliott. The WPA Theatre production has reopened at the Lucille Lortel for an eleven-week engagement. (121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Bring In da Noise, Bring In da Funk—In director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover's heroically energetic musical, the extraordinary Glover and his sensational group of young tap dancers and street drummers bring joy. They bring fury. They bring history and ecstasy. (5/20/96) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Chicago City Limits—The improv company takes aim at the 1996 Presidential campaign with a new revue, "Right to Laugh Party." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, First Ave. at 61st St. 888-5233.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's production of the Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical (which starred the Marx Brothers in 1925). (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Cowgirls—An appealing, if somewhat predictable, musical comedy, in which three chamber musicians are transformed into fringe-wearin', honky-tonkin' cowgirls. Mary Murfitt, the show's composer and lyricist, and Betsy Howie, who wrote the book, are part of the fine cast. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Da—In the Irish playwright Hugh Leonard's 1978 memory play, the middle-aged Charlie (Ciaran O'Reilly) reconsiders his tangled relationship with his recently deceased father (Brian Murray), who continues to banter with him from the beyond. Murray gives a typically wonderful performance as the title character, whose blithe approach to life has led both his wife (Aideen O'Kelly) and his son to blame him for their own disappointments. Charlie, speaking to his younger self (played with appealing vulnerability by Malcolm Adams), distills his regret for this into a single line: "It was a long time before I learned that love turned upside down is still love for all that." Charlotte Moore's assured staging doesn't shy away from the sorrow in Leonard's comedy, and the other members of the first-rate cast—Paddy Croft, Julia Gibson, John Leighton, and Paul McGrane—shift effortlessly between the past and the present. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

A Delicate Balance—Decorous suburban ennui is transformed into real angst in this bracing, astringent revival of Edward Albee's 1966 play about a family that has sacrificed much of its humanity for the sake of appearances. The cast, under the fine direction of Gerald Gutierrez, is uniformly excellent. (5/27/96) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

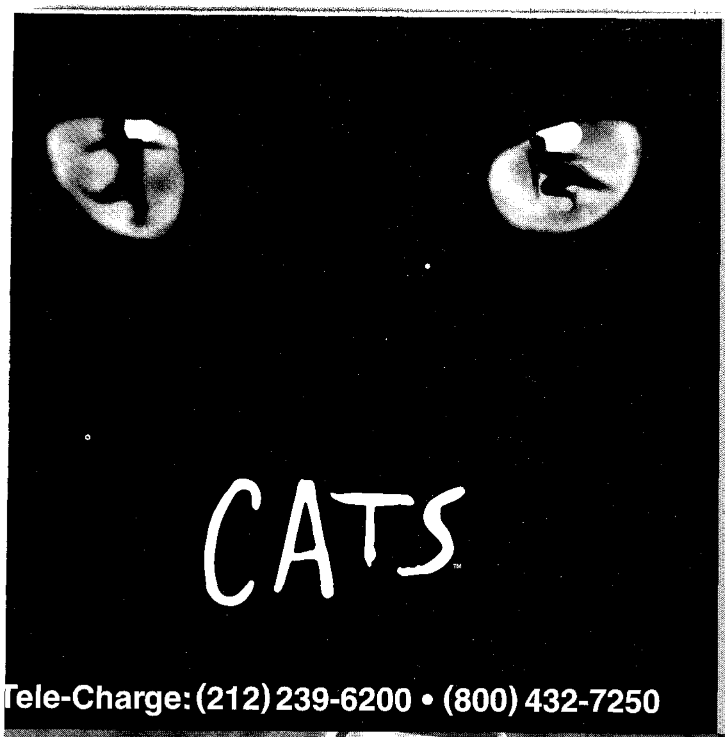
Forbidden Hollywood—Gerard Alessandrini's hit-and-miss movie-biz sendup. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum—Burt Shevelove, Larry Gelbart, and Stephen Sondheim's 1962 musical-comedy version of a Roman farce is a joke play that begs for outrageousness. But Jerry Zaks's peppy, acrylic revival, with Nathan Lane in the role of Pseudolus, seldom enters that giddy zone of comic daring. (5/20/96) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Getaway—The New Georges summer series of one-acts by emerging female playwrights continues, Thursdays through Sundays, through Aug. 18. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Grace & Glorie—Estelle Parsons plays a ninety-year-old illiterate mountain woman whose last days are interrupted by a well-meaning hospice volunteer (Lucie Arnaz) who has an M.B.A. from Harvard and has moved to Virginia to escape her own tragedy. Tom Ziegler's tale is utterly predictable but charmingly told, and under Gloria Muzio's direction the performances of the two actresses make the blend of humor and pathos affecting rather than cloying. Parsons captures the spirit of the play when she wears makeup for the first time: her smile is a perfect combination of mischievous pleasure at her appearance and serene lack of regret that she hasn't had such benefits before. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-9393.)

Heavenly Days—Zeus, king of the gods, develops an Olympian crush on a college boy vacationing in Mykonos, in John Glines's



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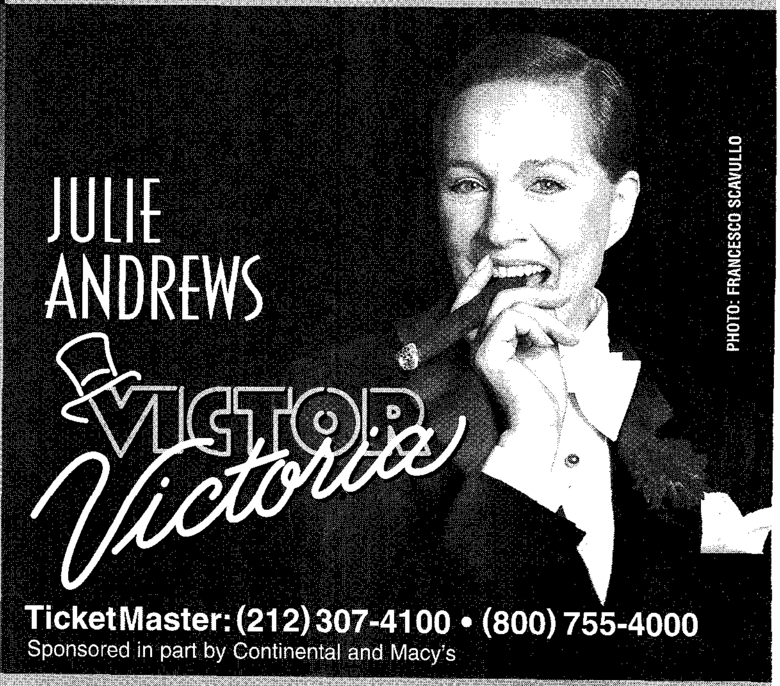
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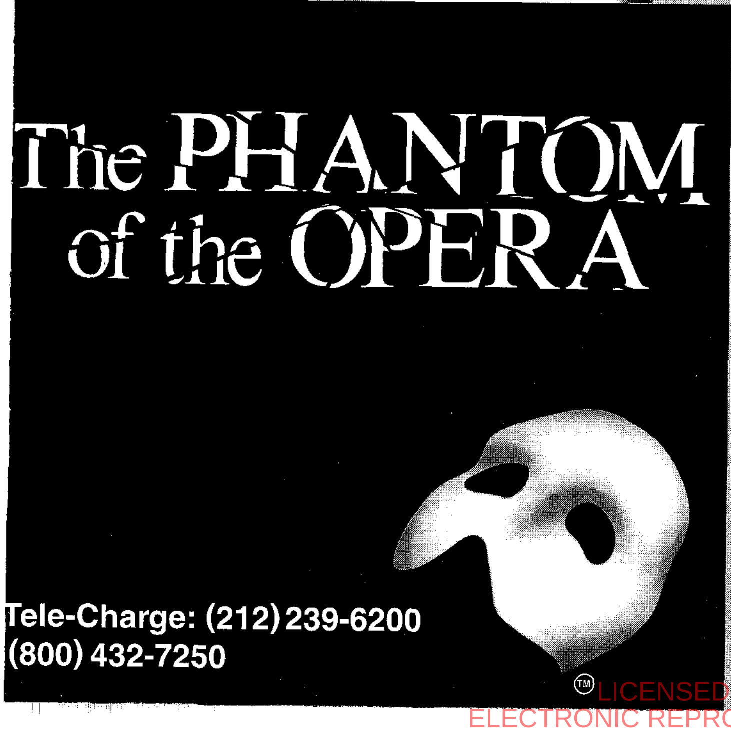
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contemporary version of the Amphitryon myth. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 924-1198.)

Ice Factory Festival—The SoHo Think Tank wraps up its summer shindig with an adaptation of Heiner Müller's "The Task," written and directed by Richard Eoin Nash-Siedlecki. Aug. 15-17 at 7. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 966-4844.)

An Ideal Husband—In Oscar Wilde's hundred-and-one-year-old play, a youthful transgression comes back to threaten the career of a promising Cabinet member. The man who saves the day is played, with showy aplomb, by Martin Shaw. The rest of the delightful, mostly British cast, under the direction of Peter Hall, is well up to the Wildean wit and wisdom, and the evening flies by in a flash of epigrammatic splendor. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining such made-for-musical-theatre issues as parents who talk baby talk, the injustice of long ladies'-room lines, the gruesomeness of bridesmaids' dresses, and the unbearable triteness of shopping. Couples in the audience may nudge each other happily as they guess the actors' lines before they're uttered. Directed by Joel Bishoff. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

The King and I—In a word, magnificent. Hats off to Donna Murphy, as Anna, Lou Diamond Phillips, as the King of Siam, and everyone else (including Rodgers and Hammerstein, of course) who had a hand in this production. Christopher Renshaw directed. (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Love's Labour's Lost—The Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's second and final offering of the summer. (Boscobel Restoration, Garrison, N.Y. For ticket information and directions, call 1-914 265-9575.)

Love Thy Neighbor—Starbucks coffee, Princess Di, and the Internet are among the casualties in Jackie Mason's latest two-hour monologue. Stuffed into a tight black suit, the sixty-two-year-old comic prowls the stage like a rabid penguin, parcelling out tough love with equal-opportunity glee. His range may be limited, but his timing is perfect: when he responds to Jesse Jackson's call for more black accountants by citing the dearth of Jewish coal miners ("Ever see a yarmulke with a searchlight?"), the house rocks with laughter. The set, a mock Lower East Side street, is clever and unobtrusive; the Boys Choir of Harlem shows up briefly, via videotape, to sing "Hava Nagila." (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Making Porn—Rex Chandler has the role of the straight star Jack Hawk in Ronnie Larsen's play about the gay-porn business. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200.)

Orestes: I Murdered My Mother—Jeff Cohen's updating of the Euripides play, in which the tabloid press takes a crack at the matricide and his sister Electra. (One Dream, 232 West Broadway. 279-4200. Closes Aug. 18.)

Phaedra—In his new one-person show, Everett Quinton, of the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, plays a gum-chewing waitress in a Greek diner who starts out helping a high-school kid with his homework and ends up taking on all the roles in the tragic soap opera recalled in the title. But although Quinton cuts a striking figure, with his bald head and combat-fatigues gown, his frantic pace suggests that he's trying to make up in sweat what he lacks in art. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 307-4100.)

Possible Worlds—A science-fiction mystery cum love story by John Mighton, in an Adobe Theatre Company production. (46 Walker St. 560-7387. Closes Sept. 7.)

Rent—The late Jonathan Larson's rock opera, inspired by Puccini's "La Bohème," stands every assumption of the traditional musical on its head. It can't support the narrative overload (eight separate stories are told), yet by the end of the evening Larson's talent has taken the audience to places the musical never ventures these days. Directed by Michael Greif. (2/19/96) (Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.)

Seven Guitars—August Wilson's exciting new play flashes back to the final days of a Pittsburgh blues singer (Keith David). The seven guitars of the title are the seven memorable characters whose high times and dashed dreams Wilson turns into beautiful, complex music—a funky, wailing, irresistible Chicago blues. Lloyd Richards is the director. (4/15/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You—Christopher Durang's 1979 comedy, starring Geraldine Librandi and directed by Mark Cannistraro. Saturdays at 8. (Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. S. 255-5438.)

Valley of the Dolls—Theatre-a-Go-Go, from Los Angeles, offers a stage adaptation of the film adaptation of Jacqueline Susann's novel. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230

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DANCE

LINCOLN CENTER OUT-OF-DOORS—Open-air dance—predominantly swing on the plaza in recent weeks—moves back to the stage, with free performances through Sept. 3. Aug. 14-15 at 8:15: Dallas Black Dance Theatre, in works set to Marvin Gaye, Coolio, Nina Simone, et al. (Damrosch Park.) . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 6: New Moves in Collaboration, with "Secret/Bangalore," by Dunya and Eric Johnson; "Hanging There," by Shen Wei and Kung Chi Shing; and "Tightrope," by Nicholas Leichter and Christian Cherry. (Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 6: Sarah Skaggs, in "Reeling" and excerpts from "Higher Ground." (Fountain Plaza.) . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 5: Ka-Tap, a company that blends two improvisatory forms of percussive dance, kathak and tap, performs to the music of Mongo Santamaria and Pandit Birju Maharaj, among others. (Fountain Plaza. For more information, call 875-5108.)

FELD BALLETS/NY—The company previews four new works ("Yo Shakespeare," "Industry," "Shuffle," and "Evening Chant") with recent graduates of its New Ballet School, which offers professional training to dancers from local schools. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Aug. 14-16 at 8, and Aug. 17 at 2 and 8.)

PILAR RIOJA—This commanding figure in traditional Spanish dance has always been somewhat professorial in her programs; her twenty-fourth New York season is no exception, with new and old works emphasizing the Iberian influence on ballet's port de bras and a première, "Oración del Torero," suggesting connections between the capework of the matador and the skirt flourishes of the flamenco artist. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Aug. 14 at 7, Aug. 15-16 at 8, and Aug. 17-18 at 3.)

"FREIHEIT MAKES A STAND"—Choreographer Clare Maxwell and theatre director Barry Rowell of the Peculiar Works Project take one of Shakespeare's high-body-count tragedies, "Coriolanus," as the template for an exploration of the militia movement. (Vineyard's 26th Street Theatre, 309 E. 26th St. 529-3626, ext. 100. Aug. 15-17 at 8 and Aug. 18 at 5. Through Sept. 1.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL—Aug. 13-16 at 8:30 and Aug. 17 at 2 and 8:30: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 7: David Grenke. . . . ¶ Aug. 15-16 at 8, Aug. 17 at 5, and Aug. 18 at 7: Jazzdance by Danny Buraczeski. (Becket, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

INDIGO GIRLS—Over the past seven years, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have built up a huge, devoted following with their ugly-duckling-no-more brand of folk and pop. Live, the duo alternates between Ray's rebellious rites-of-passage songs and Saliers' darker unrequited-love numbers. (Saliers is also an excellent guitar player.) Backed up by a slick band, they deliver a high-powered show, and their (almost exclusively female) audience showers them with flowers. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Aug. 14 at 8.)

Dance and music at Lincoln Center's free outdoor concert series.

DENA SCHUTZER

BUCKWHEAT ZYDECO—The eponymous ambassador of zydeco music, a Cajun stew of accordion-heavy grooves, is a true party professional. Seasoned by decades of touring, he knows how to make even the most uptight New York crowd dance. Keep your eye on the washboard player. (Metrotech, Flatbush and Myrtle Aves., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. Aug. 15 at noon and 1.)

THE H.O.R.D.E. FESTIVAL—It stands for Horizons of Rock Developing Everywhere, and it's the blue-jeans-and-Birkenstocks alternative to the pierced-navel landscapes of Lollapalooza. This year's revue includes seventies revisionists Blues Traveler (whose zaftig harmonica player, John Popper, is the festival's guiding light), grave robber Lenny Kravitz, prog-rock gods King Crimson, and Southern-rock reanimators Son Volt. There will also be environmental workshops and a selection of ethnic foods. (Downing Stadium, Randall's Island. 307-7171. Aug. 16 at 4:30.)

DAVID MURRAY OCTET—He may have had his thunder stolen by the neo-con explosion, but Murray, the great hope of the eighties, is still a contender, and still capable of toppling buildings with his galvanic tenor-saxophone work. For this performance, he turns to jazz's latest fixation—the music of the Grateful Dead. But beyond the novelty of the repertoire (his new "Dark Star" is all Dead covers) it's just business as usual for this effusive, bounding player. His arrangements give his octet plenty of room, and his fur-flying solos can rock any bandstand. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Brooklyn. Aug. 16 at 7.)

SONNY ROLLINS—He may not have a Young Turk egging him on for this gig, as he does at his uptown extravaganzas, but the saxophone colossus rarely needs anyone to help him get his motor started; and when it's humming, he lives up to his reputation as the greatest living jazz improviser. His ballads are magisterial; his melodies dance to irrepressible inner rhythms that cast waves into the audience. Though big affairs tend to spook him, it's just this side of a sure thing that this free concert will be the jazz event of the season. (Lincoln Center Bandshell. Aug. 16 at 8.)

ALANIS MORISSETTE / RADIOHEAD—"Jagged Little Pill," the major-label début by this twenty-one-year-old Canadian whippersnapper, has now sold more than eleven million copies, which makes it one of the biggest débuts ever—a testament, perhaps, less to her talent (an above-average roar and a gift for compressing sexual outrage into pithy couplets) than to the scouting and marketing genius of the maverick who signed her, Madonna. / Thom Yorke, the lead singer of this Brit-pop phenomenon whose latest effort, "The Bends," landed on many a year-end list, looks like Martin Short's evil twin and has a well-earned reputation for being a complete pest. But don't let that put you off: these are the very qualities that somehow provide a flinty core to the group's distracting lushness. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. Aug. 16-17 at 8. . . . ¶ Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Aug. 19 at 8.)

DEE DEE BRIDGEWATER WITH THE BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC—She now calls France her home, but this American-born singer is fondly remembered here for her seventies stint with the Thad Jones–Mel Lewis big band and her subsequent Broadway turn in "The Wiz." Her last release paid tribute to the composer Horace Silver, and once again she found the intersection of sensuality and swing. (Prospect Park Bandshell, Brooklyn. Aug. 17 at 7.)

TERRY ADAMS AND MARSHALL ALLEN—On good nights it's hard to decide which band is more daring or wackier, NRBQ or Sun Ra's Arkestra. Let's just say that they're (loony) birds of a feather. To prove it, Adams, NRBQ's leader, and Allen, the Arkestra's front man (now that Ra and John Gilmore are gone), are appearing as a duo. No amount of goofiness could diminish Adams' skill as a dexterous and eclectic pianist; Allen's work on the alto saxophone is seriously adventurous. (Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway. 1-718 638-5000, ext. 230. Aug. 18 at 3.)

MAX ROACH—The great drummer eats, drinks, and breathes rhythm. For this gig he'll bring a lifetime of percussive inquiry to the Latin fire of Groupo AfroCuban. (Lincoln Center Bandshell. No tickets necessary. Aug. 18 at 8.)

NEIL YOUNG / JEWEL / AFGHAN WHIGS—In the five years since he last toured with Crazy Horse—the lumbering, magnificent garage band he's been working with on and off since 1968—Young has indulged his chameleon tendencies by making a sequel to his 1972 hit, "Harvest," doing MTV Unplugged, recording a Kurt Cobain tribute with Crazy Horse and a Jim Jarmusch soundtrack, and playing with Pearl Jam and Booker T. and the MGs. (He's also been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.) Add his new album with Crazy Horse, "Broken Arrow," to the list, and there will be plenty of fresh material for Crazy Neil and the Young Horse to blast through in all its ragged, proto-grunge glory. “Broken Arrow” has three or four great new songs (and a few forgettable toss-offs); Young still has a near-miraculous talent for staying a step ahead of his golden-oldies ghost. / Jewel is a remarkable twenty-one-year-old singer-songwriter who grew up on an eight-hundred-acre farm in Alaska and who honors her mountain roots by finishing her shows with Olympic-calibre yodelling; she also used to date Sean Penn. She has almost single-handedly returned folk to stadium-size popularity. / Judging from the funky grooves on their fourth record, “Black Love,” the Afghan Whigs would have you believe that they’re rock and roll’s newest salute to James Brown. They’re not. Which is not to say they’re no good: singer Greg Dulli chronicles his growing pains and aching heart with a howling falsetto, and the band has a nice way with big, sprawling guitars. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Aug. 19 at 8.)

Diblo Dibala & Matchatcha—Music from Zaire. (Fort Greene Park, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary. Aug. 20 at 7.)

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Aug. 17: Grand Ole Opry member **HAL KETCHUM** has a strong, sturdy voice and a storyteller’s eye for detail—traits that have helped make this carpenter turned singer one of the least cookie-cutter-like stars in country music. Like most Texas-based performers, he’s got some folk and some honky-tonk in his blood. His latest best-of release, “The Hits,” is a fine introduction to his impressive catalog. Come early for **GRETCHEN PETERS,** who has already demonstrated a gift for tackling crises with dignity and strength on the elegant songs she has written for such country stars as George Strait, Patty Loveless, and Trisha Yearwood. On her own first album, “The Secret of Life,” her understated lyrics flit between narrative and introspection and her cinnamon-toast vocals ache with knowing. Mix in potent melodies and savvy arrangements and you’ve got the perfect antidote to Shania Twain.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Aug. 14: **THROWING MUSES.** Former member Tanya Donelly may get all the attention for her own group, Belly, but the Muses’ gripping new record, “University,” far surpasses those of Belly and of most other alternative-rock poster children in potency and inventiveness. Led for more than ten tumultuous years by the pixieish singer Kristin Hersh, the Muses shift between guitar mayhem and swirling, otherworldly realms.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Aug. 16-17: **SON SEALS.** One of the leading figures of post-sixties blues, this son of an Arkansas juke-joint operator plays in the slashing, urgent style of his mentor, Albert King. Such aptly named classics as “Chicago Fire” (1980) helped cement his reputation, and live he still smolders.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Aug. 14: **SISTER MACHINE GUN.** Aug. 16: The **TOASTERS.**

Maxwell’s, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Aug. 16: **SYD STRAW.** It’s been a long, strange trip since her delightful 1990 début, “Surprise.” In the intervening years, this former Golden Palominos vocalist got married and divorced and played a hippie chick in “Tales of the City.” This year she returned to her true calling (with a little help from one of the world’s greatest bar bands, the Skeletons) and released a glorious comeback, “War and Peace.” She’s one of the most underrated singers around. Aug. 18-19: **YO LA TENGO.** This literate outfit, headed by the husband-and-wife team of singer Ira Kaplan and drummer Georgia Hubley, has a flair for crisp, three-minute pop songs and a weakness for interminable feedback experiments. In between, they occasionally dip into the kind of blissful folk rock they played on “Fakebook,” their gorgeous 1990 collection of (mostly) covers. Concertgoers never really know which band they’re in for.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Aug. 16: **KEVIN SALEM** has played guitar for Freedy Johnston and Yo La Tengo, and his own record, “Soma City,” a collection of forlorn folk-rock gems, is a keeper. Aug. 17: You and What Army. Aug. 20: **ELEANOR MC EVOY** is a star in her native Ireland, and the clear-voiced singer-songwriter and classically trained violinist may achieve stardom here, too, with the eye-opening pop of her soon-to-be-released “What’s Following Me?”

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist **DIANA KRALL** shines in the Oak Room through late August. A witty singer and an insouciant pianist, she is just a whisper shy of true maturity; having studied with the late Jimmy Rowles, she makes growing up in public a wonder to behold. Dining.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Aug. 16-17: The **RICHIE BEIRACH** trio. A pianist with a poetic cast, Beirach penetrates a tune’s core through harmonic exploration and then reports his findings with a temperate touch. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Aug. 18: **TANIA MARIA.** Starting Aug. 20: **LARRY CARLTON.** For decades, Carlton was best known as the preëminent session guitarist—he could be heard on everything from Steely Dan records to TV theme songs. A few years back, nerve damage from a gunshot wound nearly ended his career. After extensive rehab, Carlton is back, and he’s playing with a newfound fire. Dining.

Bradley’s, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Through Aug. 17: three exceptional younger players—pianist **JONNY KING,** saxophonist **DON BRADEN,** and bassist **JAMES GENUS**—will report on the state of contemporary jazz or, more probably, just have some fun blowing standards. Either approach is worth checking out.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—The rambunctious **DAVID MURRAY** big band (Aug. 19), now in its second year, has become a Monday-night tradition here. Chock-full of lively soloists, not the least being its irrepressible leader, it’s thick with spirit and sass. Aug. 20: **DON BYRON’S MUSIC FOR SIX MUSICIANS.** With **LOST TRIBE** and the **DAVE DOUGLAS** trio. Tuesday nights in the Tap Room, drummer Bobby Previte leads a collective of hotshots through early fusion masterworks. This overlooked material never sounded as good as it does in the hands of these eager musicians. And, besides, it’s free.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—“20th Century Rhythm & Blues,” a revue featuring Maxine Brown, Vivian Reed, and Bunny Sigler, continues through late August. Closed Mondays.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—Through Aug. 14: the **LEE KONITZ** trio. Although the gorgeous clear-water tone comes and goes with his moods, altoist Konitz remains one of the foremost improvisers of our time. He knows more harmony than just about anyone, and he uses his erudition to create undulating melodies that have the pungency of Charlie Parker and the logic of Bach.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The **DOROTHY DONEGAN** trio takes over on Aug. 20. Now in her seventies, Donegan can still scare your pants off with her wild, free-association piano discourses. She’ll try anything, even the impossible, interpolating classical themes into Tin Pan Alley, slinging off Tatum volleys, and romping through stride passages when the spirit moves her. It’s on-the-edge stuff, fun and life-affirming.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The **ERIC REED** trio has the stage through Aug. 18. Wynton Marsalis has a real ear for pianists, and Reed, one of his recent hires, is a typically excellent find. He may traffic in Hancockisms and Tynerisms, but a distinctive gospel touch enriches his work. The **TERENCE BLANCHARD** quintet gets the call starting Aug. 20. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—“Winslow Homer,” a comprehensive survey of the painter’s career, comprising nearly two hundred paintings, watercolors, and drawings. The exhibition is sumptuous, deeply satisfying, and well balanced, and it reveals unsuspected depths in Homer’s art. Yet the images that will stay with you are the stout-hearted mountain guides, the bashful adolescent lovers, the daydreaming schoolteacher oblivious of her pupils’ innocent games under cloudless skies. Was America ever really such an idyllic place? The dark edges are there (some of the seascapes are truly terrifying), but the overwhelming impression is of a defiantly hopeful spirit; even the early, reportorial Civil War paintings emphasize the camaraderie and bravery of the soldiers rather than their suffering. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ “Ancient Art from the Shumei Family Collection.” A grab bag of antiquities with no theme beyond excellence—and that’s good enough. The Shumei Family is a spiritual organization with a strong aesthetic emphasis which is building a mountaintop museum in Japan designed by I. M. Pei. The objects on loan range from exquisitely wrought gold vessels from third-millennium-B.C. Persia to remarkably fresh Roman garden frescoes to exuberantly painted Islamic ceramics. According to the founder of the Shumei, “Unless you make others happy, you can never be happy yourself”; this exhibition should bring felicity to everyone connected with it. Through Sept. 1. . . . ¶ “Toulouse-Lautrec.” Through Sept. 29. . . . **NOTE:** The museum’s roof garden is open (weather permitting), with sculptures by Rodin, Lachaise, Lipchitz, Caro, Smith (David), and Smith (Tony). (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—“From Bauhaus to Pop: Masterworks Given by Philip Johnson.” Through Sept. 3. . . . ¶ “Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation” includes a hundred and thirty paintings, and nearly as many works on paper, depicting lovers, wives, poets, art dealers, and children. Through Sept. 17. . . . ¶ “Pictures of the Times: A Century of Prints from the New York *Times*.” Through Oct. 1. . . . ¶ “Thinking Print: Books to Billboards, 1980-95.” Through Sept. 10. (For the run of the Picasso show, the museum’s hours are Saturdays through Mondays, 9:30 to 6; Tuesdays, 11 to 6; and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30. Timed-entry tickets to Picasso are available in the lobby and through Ticketmaster, at 307-4545.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—“Africa: The Art of a Continent.” Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ “In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present.” Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ “Meret Oppenheim: Beyond the Teacup.” Through Oct. 9. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—“NYNY: City of Ambition,” an anthology of twentieth-century images of New York drawn mostly from the permanent collection. Through Oct. 27. . . . ¶ “Perpetual Mirage: Photographic Narratives of the Desert West,” a subdued, library-style exhibit of books and prints from 1848 to the present. Through Sept. 22. . . . ¶ “Paul Cadmus: The Sailor Trilogy.” Through Sept. 1. . . . ¶ “An American Story,” a chronological survey of twentieth-century paintings and sculptures, both well known and obscure, from the museum’s collection. Through Oct. 6. . . . ¶ A stylized, gardenlike installation of video sculptures, by Shigeko Kubota. Through Aug. 25. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—“Okavango: Africa’s Last Eden,” thirty large color photographs by Frans Lanting, of the wildlife of the Okavango Delta, in Botswana. . . . ¶ An exhibition that explores the relationship between scientific research and its presentation in the media, specifically, the New York *Times*. Through Sept. 29. . . . ¶ The Hall of Vertebrate Origins has reopened, its

DOWNTOWN SEEN: A TOUR OF LOWER MANHATTAN OUTDOOR SCULPTURE

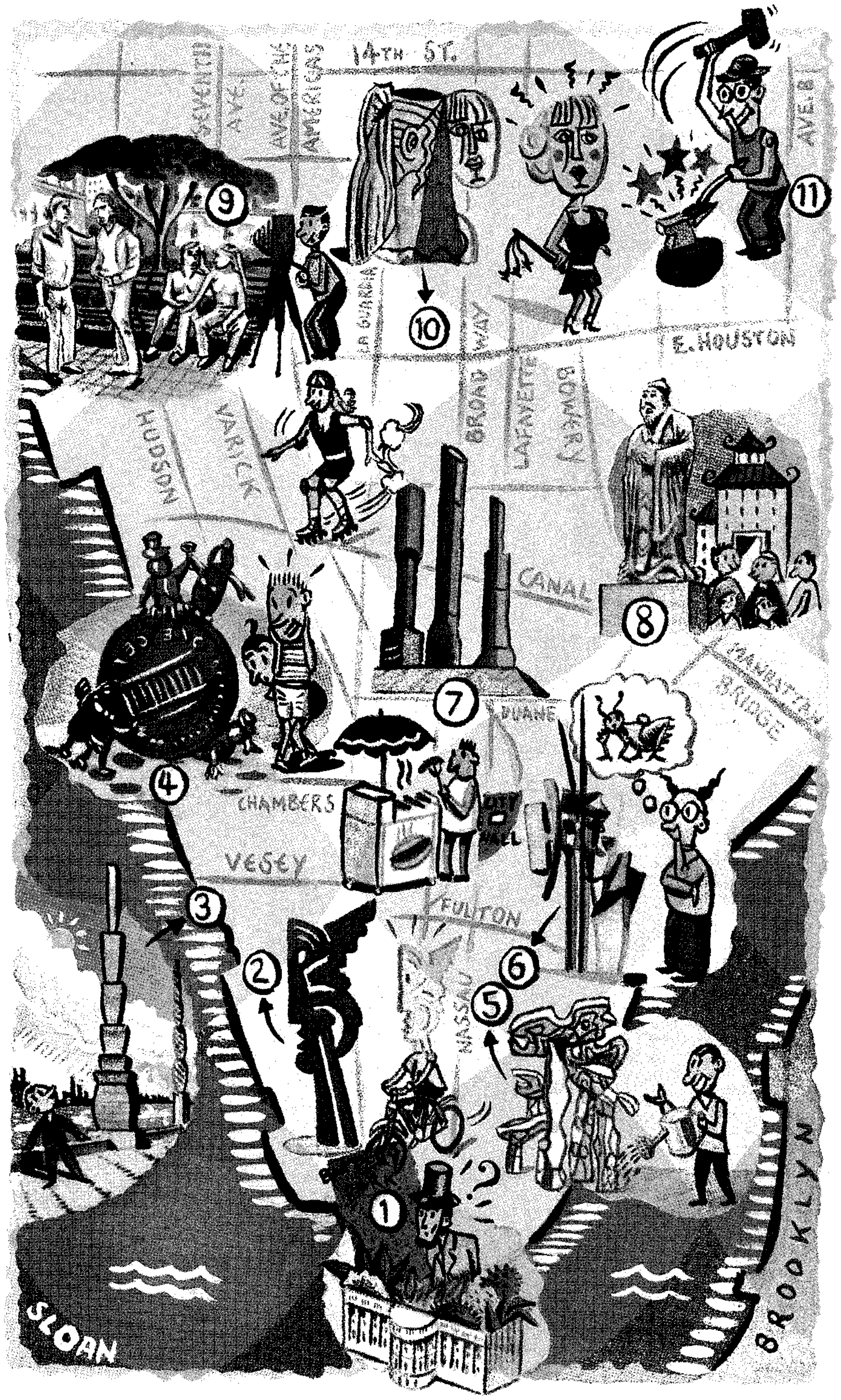
Manhattan lacks for true public plazas in the European mold, rich with public art; for the most part we depend on our smaller parks and privately maintained spaces for good sculpture and dynamic vistas. Here's an arbitrary selection of worthwhile Lower Manhattan sculpture to help satisfy a summer jones for outdoor art.

Up the Hudson—The **"White House Green House"** (1), by Karin Giusti, is in Battery Park (along State St., across from One Battery Park Plaza) through Election Day. Clear vinyl, painted with the White House façade and an image of a dollar bill, wraps around a metal frame holding two hundred roses; a table inside has a much-signed guest book and voter-registration materials. At Battery Park City's Gateway Plaza (Liberty St. and South End Ave.), Roy Lichtenstein's cobalt-blue steel **"Modern Head"** (2) nods plaintively toward New Jersey. Up the esplanade a piece are **"Two Pylons"** (3) (at the Hoboken Ferry Landing), granite-and-steel sentries from Martin Puryear which make cool, graceful additions to the riverfront. In Hudson River Park (at the north end of the esplanade), **"The Real World"** (4), by Tom Otterness, takes over: delightful groupings of Lilliputian bronze figures and animals strewn about the main walkway and crawling across the seats and tables.

Financial District—One of our best outdoor sculptures is the daydreamy **"Group of Four Trees"** (5), by Jean Dubuffet (Chase Manhattan Plaza, at Nassau and Pine Sts.). Though the undulating painted-fibreglass forms are forty-two feet tall, they're dwarfed by the eight-hundred-foot Chase tower. Set a safe distance from the plaza's ten real trees, the work looks like the shy new kid at school recess. A block north is Louise Nevelson Plaza (William St. and Maiden Lane), a large traffic island that is home to Nevelson's **"Shadows and Flags"** (6), a monumental construction of curls, cylinders, and boxes in black Corten steel, and six smaller adjunct sculptures on poles. (A pleasant surprise: on the western façade of 80 Maiden Lane you'll find a funky, five-story rendering of Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of la Grande Jatte.")

Broadway to Bowery—Beverly Pepper's **"Sentinel Park"** (7) (Federal Plaza, at Broadway and Duane St.) is a group of gorgeously rusted iron totems planted in grassy terraces; they distract attention from the plaza's front line of government-issue concrete barriers masquerading as mammoth flowerpots. To the northeast stands **Confucius** (8) Plaza (Bowery and Division St.), where Liu Shih's bronze statue of the great Chinese sage patiently awaits cleaning and restoration.

Above Houston—Christopher Park, at Sheridan Square, takes pride in **"Gay Liberation"** (9), by George Segal: two life-size bronze couples, one male, one female, both painted white. Denizens of New York University can contemplate Picasso's **"Bust of Sylvette"** (10) (University Plaza, Bleecker St. and La Guardia Pl.), a thirty-six-foot sandblasted concrete translation of a small painted-metal sculpture. And East Village habitués now encounter a new sight on what used to be an unofficial community garden: the **Rivington School Sculpture Garden** (11) (6th St. and Avenue B), filled with iron sculptures along with some eye-catching studio scrap.



MICHAEL SLOAN

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dropped ceiling removed to reveal Calvert Vaux's skylit design. All the better to see the dunkleosteus, a sixteen-foot-long hanging model of an armored fish, based on the four-foot-long fossil of its head, with self-sharpening jawbones. . . . ¶ "Amber: Window to the Past." Through Sept. 2. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"The Illegal Camera: Photography in the Netherlands During the German Occupation, 1940-1945." Sixty works by professional and amateur Dutch photographers who documented the arrests of Jews, forced labor, looting, and starvation. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Anyone curious about the current state of figurative painting will find signs of life at this year's edition of a juried exhibition that has been held annually since 1826. Loring Coleman's watercolor "Frozen Quiet" effectively uses the white ground to create a peaceful, snowy landscape. David Ruiz's "Self Portrait with Skeleton" is arrestingly conceived and flawlessly executed. Another self-portrait, by Richard Maury, is fearless and truthful, right down to the endearing detail of the title on an art-book jacket rendered just as it appeared in the artist's mirror: nietsnetdɔi⅃ . Some big names participate (Philip Pearlstein, a loyal academy member, contributed a prize-winning nude), but most of the gallery space is devoted to talented and aspiring semiprofessionals, several of whose paintings are as sophisticated as anything in SoHo. Through Sept. 1. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission after 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Summer hours: unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

James Lee Byars—He remains an artist eluding classification—a visionary for some, a charlatan for others. His work crisscrossed movements and mediums, touching on Fluxus, performance, minimalism, and Conceptualism. Some of his early pieces were ephemeral to the point of invisibility; subsequently he developed in the opposite direction, creating pared-down monuments in which he indulged his love of opulent materials—marble, gold, or, in the case of "The Angel" (on view here), a hundred ever so fragile Venetian-glass spheres. The form of "The Angel" is something like a quadruple shepherd's crook, suggesting a possible Old Testament interpretation. Whatever it means, it's a tribute to Byars' elusive, poetic imagination and to his light touch with luxe. Through Aug. 16. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St.)

Group Shows—At **marisa del re,** 41 E. 57th St.: A sampling of twentieth-century movements, represented by, among others, Karel Appel, Arman, Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Pousette-Dart, and James Rosenquist. Through Aug 30. . . . **hirschl & adler modern,** 21 E. 70th St.: Paintings by gallery artists, including Carol Diehl, Charles Garabedian, John Lees, and Joan Snyder, and a "painting in the round" by Grace Knowlton. Through Aug. 16. . . . **pace wildenstein,** 32 E. 57th St.: Sculptures and paintings by Donald Judd, Joel Shapiro, Barbara Hepworth, Elizabeth Murray, and Robert Mangold. Through Sept. 7. (Closes Fridays at 4.)

Short List—**elizabeth catlett,** Caribbean Cultural Center, 408 W. 58th St. Through Aug. 16. . . . **eric holzman,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Through Aug. 30. . . . **elizabeth olds,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. Through Aug. 23. . . . **larry poons,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Through Aug. 30.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

AC2K—"SoHo So Long," a smart and funny mixed-medium installation by "the Artist Formerly Known as Art Club 2000" (the reduction of the name seems to have been inspired by Calvin Klein's CK1). This collective of twentysomething artists is perhaps best known for its satirical Gap ads and shop installation (a project that received attention from both the critics and the Gap's attorneys). Now the group has turned its attention to the shifting fortunes of SoHo as retail takes over and galleries flock to Chelsea. The centerpiece of the exhibition is a series of photographs of dealers, critics, and collectors—no artists—posing in various *echt*-SoHo locations; the accompanying catalogue includes transcripts of interviews with the subjects, who answer such questions as "Is SoHo over?" and "Will Chelsea reign?" Through Aug. 31. (American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. Opens at noon. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

Edward Ruscha—A retrospective of the California Pop Conceptualist's artist books of the sixties. Their procedures (serialism, enumeration, etc.) notwithstanding, they avoided the often prim or sour seriousness of other conceptual art. (The most dramatic of the books, "Royal Road Test," documents Ruscha and a friend's defenestration of a Royal typewriter onto a California freeway.) "Every Building on the Sunset Strip," "Twentysix Gasoline Stations," "Various Small Fires and Milk," "Some Los Angeles Apartments"—these serenely deadpan titles belie a body of work that, despite its unassuming manner and humble materials, represents one of the lasting achievements of sixties art. Through Aug. 31. (Printed Matter, 77 Wooster St. Open Saturdays until 7.)

"Boliw: Shrine Figures of the Bamana, Mali"—A group of twelve sacred sculptures, made from such materials as wood, earth, clay, bones, blood, urine, beer, and bark. Through Oct. 5. (Blum, 99 Wooster St.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

"California Photography from a Seventies Perspective, Part III"—Selections from a collection that was formed in a one-month period in 1979. Among the eighteen artists whose work is on view are Diane Buckler, John Divola, Barbara Kasten, Richard Misrach, Leland Rice, and Larry Sultan. Through Aug. 16. (Seagram Building, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St., fourth floor. Closes Fridays at 1.)

"The Cool & the Crazy"—Images of punk through the years, from a naked Iggy Pop to Television at CBGB to Lydia Lunch to Richard Hell. The photographers include Jimmy de Sana, Gerard Malanga, Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, Allen Ginsberg, Annie Leibovitz, Stephen Shore, and Pennie Smith. Through Sept. 7. (McGrath, 20 W. 57th St. Closed Mondays.)

"Delirium"—Summer group shows generally shoot for a light spirit and an easily grasped theme (or none at all); this large selection of portraits and a few abstract images, from 1854 to the present, has a darker cast, and it hangs together beautifully. Artists whose work is on view include Nancy Burson, George Krause, Saul Leiter, Joe Mills, Gerald Slota, Melissa Springer, and Jill Waterman. Through Aug. 17. (Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays.)

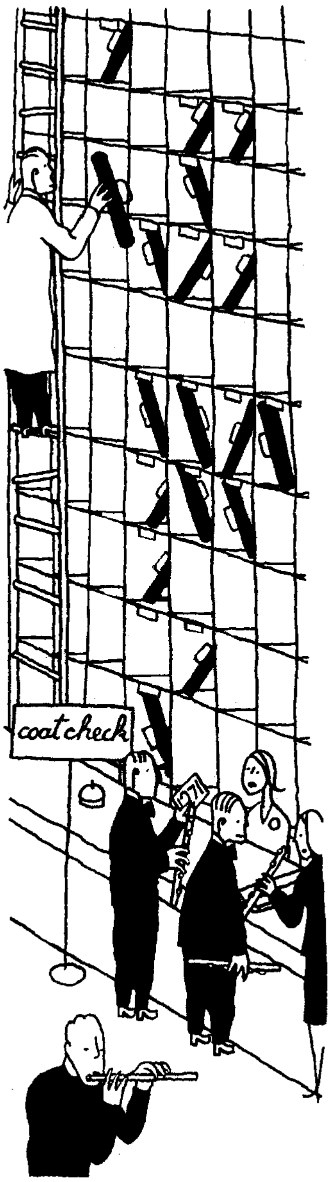
"Out Takes"—Uncharacteristic works by such gallery artists as Sally Apfelbaum, Bill Jacobson, Geanna Merola, Tseng Kwong Chi, and Penelope Umbrico. Through Aug. 16. (Saul, 560 Broadway. Closed Mondays.)

"Two" / Evelyn Hofer—A diverse selection of photographs that feature pairs of things—trees, feet, windows, watermelons, flowers, angels, firemen. The artists include Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Eugène Atget, André Kertész, Koichiro Kurita, August Sander, Jill Seymour, and Edward Weston. / Double portraits and interiors that inspired the concurrent group show. Both shows through Aug. 23. (Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Closed Mondays.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Landscapes of the Civil War." Selections from the five thousand recently discovered albumen prints in the collection of the Medford (Massachusetts) Historical Society. Through Nov. 10. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**roger ballen,** Taranto, 39 W. 14th St. Open Saturdays; through Aug. 17. . . . **anthony barboza,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through Aug. 16. . . . **steven brock,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. Through Aug. 16. . . . **gustav klutsis,** Schickler, 52 E. 76th St. Through Aug. 16. . . . **jonas mekas,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Closed Mondays; through Aug. 16. . . . **pedro meyer,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Closed Mondays; open Saturdays; through Aug. 17. . . . **david turnley** and **peter turnley,** International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through Sept. 8. . . . **bing wright / jenny saville and glen luchford,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. Closes at 4 on Fridays; through Aug. 30.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Jewish Museum.)



The National Flute Association Convention.

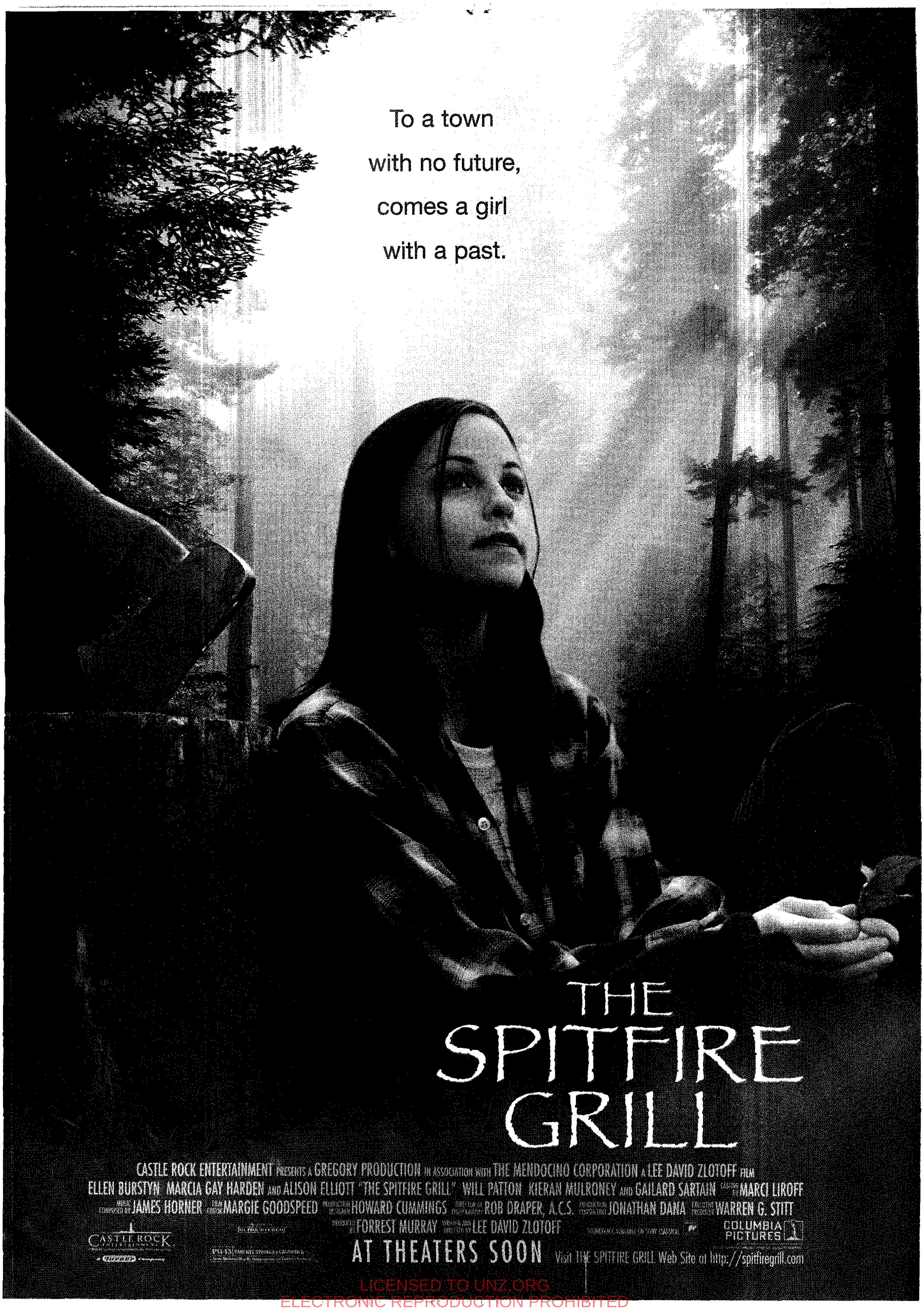
LAURENT CILLUFFO

CLASSICAL MUSIC

IN TOWN

Mostly Mozart—Aug. 14: Gerard Schwarz conducts the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 2 (with flutist James Galway) and three works by Mozart: the Concerto for Flute and Harp (with Mr. Galway and Naoko Yoshino), the Horn Concerto No. 2 (with John Cerminaro), and the Symphony No. 36 (the "Linz"). . . . ¶ Aug. 15: The Beaux Arts Trio offers trios by Mozart (in C Major), Mendelssohn (in D Minor), and Schubert (in B-Flat Major). . . . ¶ Aug. 16: Mr. Schwarz leads the orchestra in Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 3, Clementi's Symphony No. 4, and Mozart's G-Major Piano Concerto (K. 453, with Garrick Ohlsson) and motet "Exsultate, jubilate" (with soprano Hei-Kyung Hong). . . . ¶ Aug. 17: The same program, but with Bach's Fourth Orchestral Suite replacing the Third. . . . ¶ Aug. 19: I Solisti Veneti (conducted by Claudio Scimone) present concertos by Vivaldi ("The Four Seasons"), Antonino Pasculli, Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, and Giovanni Bottesini. . . . ¶ Aug. 20: Mr. Scimone and I Solisti Veneti offer Boccherini's "La Musica Notturna nelle Strade di Madrid" and Stabat Mater (with soprano June Anderson), in addition to concertos by Vivaldi (for four violins) and Albinoni (for oboe). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Evenings at 8.)

Wicked Woodwinds—"The flute is not an instrument which has a good moral effect," complained Aristotle. "It is too exciting." It should therefore come as no surprise that the National Flute Association, with six thousand members from forty-five countries, is the world's largest organization dedicated to a single musical instrument. More than half its members are expected to attend the group's annual convention at the Marriott Marquis (Broadway at 46th St., Aug. 15-18), where they will take in recitals, master classes, exhibits, panel discussions, and lectures (James Galway, say, on morning warmup exercises, or Carol Wincenc on commissioning new scores). There will be a concert at the hotel each evening at 8:30. Aug. 15: The United States Military Academy Band. . . . ¶ Aug. 16: Jazz, Latin, and New Age music, with Dave Valentin, José Corral, and Rhonda Larson. . . . ¶ Aug. 17: Three flutists of differing stripes: Emmanuel Pahud (principal flutist of the Berlin Philharmonic), Michael Parloff (his counterpart at the Metropolitan Opera), and David Shostac (first flutist of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra). . . . ¶ Aug. 18: Premières of works by William Thomas McKinley, Glen Cortese, Augusta Read Thomas, and Lowell Liebermann, featuring flutists Bonita Boyd, Jan Gippo, Bernard Goldberg, Grzegorz Olkiewicz, and John Wion. Mr. Cortese conducts members of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. (For information about concerts and other events, call 757-8339.)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Bargemusic—Aug. 15 at 7:30 and Aug. 18 at 4: Presenting Mozart's Divertimento in E-Flat Major for String Trio (K. 563) and Beethoven's "Archduke" Trio. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 7:30: Bion Tsang plays Kodály's Sonata for Solo Cello; pianist Judith Gordon joins him for Beethoven's Variations on "Bei Männern" (from Mozart's "Die Zauberflöte") and Grieg's Cello Sonata. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061.)

Summergarden—Cellist Zuill Bailey and pianist Simone Dinnerstein perform sonatas by Debussy and Fauré (his Second), as well as pieces by Stravinsky, Messiaen, Xenakis, and Pascal Dusapin. (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. Aug. 16-17 at 8:30. No tickets necessary.)

Bronx Arts Ensemble Orchestra—An all-Handel concert, conducted from the harpsichord by Kenneth Cooper, comprising the complete "Water Music," the G-Minor Oboe Concerto (featuring Marsha Heller), and the D-Major Concerto Grosso (Op. 3, No. 6). (Hudson River Park Pavilion, Battery Park City. Aug. 20 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

New Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra—Jeff Domoto conducts Stravinsky's Violin Concerto (featuring Julia Grueninger) and Beethoven's Symphony No. 4. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. Aug. 20 at 7:30. Tickets at the door.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood—Aug. 14 at 8:30: The Netherlands Wind Ensemble performs contemporary scores. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 8:30: The Guarneri Quartet, in the first of four Tanglewood concerts devoted to the music of Beethoven, plays the String Quartets in A Minor (Op. 132) and C Major (Op. 59, No. 3). . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 8:30: Christoph Eschenbach conducts the Boston Symphony in three works by Beethoven—"The Creatures of Prometheus" Overture, the concert scena "Ah, Perfido" (with soprano Carol Vaness), and the Third Symphony. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 8:30: The Boston Symphony, conducted by Bernard Haitink, performs Beethoven's "Consecration of the House Overture," Violin Concerto (with Pamela Frank), and Symphony No. 5. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 2:30: Mr. Eschenbach returns to the Boston Symphony's podium to lead Beethoven's "Leonore" Overture No. 3, Triple Concerto (with Ms. Frank, cellist Steven Isserlis, and pianist Olli Mustonen), and Symphony No. 7. (Lenox, Mass. 1-413 637-5165.)

Bard Music Festival—The concluding weekend of an investigation into the life and work of Charles Ives, with concerts featuring numerous singers and chamber musicians, as well as the Bard Festival Orchestra (conducted by Leon Botstein). Aug. 16, from 9:30 to 5: a daylong interdisciplinary conference on transcendentalism in nineteenth-century America. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 8:30: Mezzo-soprano Mary Ann Hart, baritone William Sharp, and pianist John Musto present art songs by Ives, with songs by Schumann, Brahms, and others interspersed. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 10 A.M.: Another panel considers transcendentalism. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 2: Ives's "Concord" Sonata shares the program with coeval piano works by Scriabin and Debussy. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 8: Mr. Botstein leads the orchestra in Ives's "Holidays" Symphony and Orchestral Set No. 2, in addition to George Whitefield Chadwick's "Melpomene Overture" and an excerpt from Horatio Parker's oratorio "Hora Novissima." . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 10:30 A.M.: Some say that Ives contributed as creatively to the insurance business as he did to music. As a partner in the firm of Ives & Myrick, he was a pioneer in the practice of assembling independent agents in national marketing networks, and he created novel life-insurance products to capitalize on the potential of direct sales to individuals. This panel discussion will explore ways that Ives balanced his business activities with his musical ones. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 2: Choral works by Ives and his contemporaries. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 5: A curious footnote of music history connects Ives to Gustav Mahler. On April 8, 1911, at the end of his second year as the New York Philharmonic's music director, Mahler and his wife set sail for Europe on what would be his final transatlantic trip. Hoping to broaden his American repertoire, Mahler took along several American symphonic scores—among them Ives's Symphony No. 3, which he had found in the office of the music copyist they both used. We don't know whether Mahler got around to reading the score during his journey. In any case, his death, on May 18, closed off the possibility of his conducting the piece, which would remain unperformed until 1946. In the festival's final concert, Mr. Botstein links Mahler and Ives by conducting each composer's Fourth Symphony. (Lectures precede many of the concerts. For more specific information about programs, locations, and tickets, call 1-914 758-3226.)

Maverick Concerts—The husband-and-wife team of violinist Kikuei Ikeda (of the Tokyo String Quartet) and violinist and violist Setsuko Nagata offers a program of duets by Martinů, Prokofiev, Mozart, and Bartók. (Woodstock, N.Y. 1-914 679-8217. Aug. 18 at 3.)

Music Mountain—The Cassatt String Quartet plays quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4) and Brahms (in C Minor); pianist Robert Weirich assists in Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quartet. (Falls Village, Conn. For information, call 1-860 824-7126. Aug. 18 at 3.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

You Had to Have a Train Set—This Sunday, Bob Diamond, of the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, will open a manhole cover at the intersection of Court Street and Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn and lead a group into a nineteenth-century train tunnel, part of a line that was abandoned in 1861. "I heard about it on the radio," Diamond says. "The guy acted as if the tunnel was just a legend, but I did some research and discovered it in 1980." Diamond, one of the founders of the Brooklyn Trolley Project, is pushing for excavation of the spur, largely for its historical interest: "When I got down there, I found some ten-gallon jugs. They said 'Daniel Kavanaugh, Liquor Dealer, 20 Atlantic Avenue.' I found him in the City Directory from 1861." (Aug. 18 at 1. For more information, call 1-718 788-8500.)

Readings—Aug. 14 at 6:30: *Observer* columnist Candace Bushnell reads from her memoir, "Sex and the City." (Rizzoli, 454 West Broadway. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 6:30: Novelist Jessica Hagedorn ("The Gangster of Love") and poet Galway Kinnell ("Imperfect Thirst") read from their work. (Union Square Park, Broadway at 16th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 7: Novelist Helen Schulman ("Out of Time") and short-story writer Elissa Schappell read from their work. (KGB, 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 8: N.A.A.C.P. president Kweisi Mfume reads from his autobiography, "No Free Ride: From the Mean Streets to the Mainstream." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Aug. 15 at 8: Second Lady Tipper Gore shows slides from the "visual diary" she has kept over the past four years. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 6:30: Ravi Shankar (the Supreme Teacher of Union with Self, not the sitar player) demonstrates yogic breathing techniques. (Learning Annex, 116 E. 85th St. 570-6500.)

Walk—Aug. 17 at 1: Bruce Kayton of Radical Walking Tours visits the haunts of Greenwich Village radicals from the teens (Emma Goldman, John Reed) and the sixties (Angela Davis, the Weather Underground). For more information, call 1-718 492-0069.

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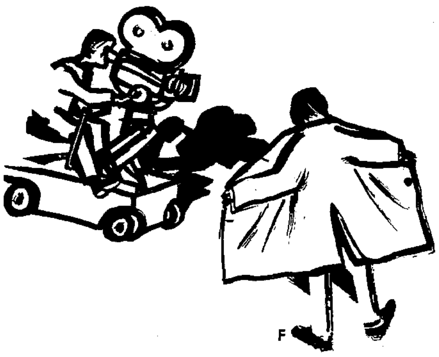
THE MOVIES



FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Alaska—Two teen-agers (Thora Birch and Vincent Kartheiser) set out to rescue their father (Dirk Benedict) after his plane crashes in the mountains, in a drama directed by Fraser C. Heston. With Charlton Heston. Written by Andy Burg and Scott Myers. Opening August 14. (Gemini.)

The Fan—Wesley Snipes is a baseball star and Robert De Niro a stalker, in a thriller directed by Tony Scott. With Ellen Barkin and John Leguizamo. Written by Phoef Sutton, from the 1995 novel by Peter Abrahams. Opening August 16. (Criterion Center, Gemini, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

House Arrest—A comedy directed by Harry Winer, about siblings (Kyle Howard and Amy Sakasitz) who lock their squabbling parents (Jamie Lee Curtis and Kevin Pollak) in the basement of their suburban home. Written by Michael Hitchcock. Opening August 14. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Village East Cinemas.)

Kansas City—Robert Altman's film about jazz and politics in the thirties. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) Opening August 16. (Coronet, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

Small Faces—Reviewed below in Current Films.

Tales from the Crypt: Bordello of Blood—A horror comedy featuring Dennis Miller as a vampire hunter. Directed by Gilbert Adler, who co-wrote the screenplay with Al Katz. Opening August 16. (First & 62nd Cinemas, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Waverly.)

Tin Cup—Reviewed below in Current Films.

The Wife—Reviewed below in Current Films.

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and James Wolcott. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 20.)

Basquiat—The life of the graffiti artist and painter, who died in 1988, written and directed by Julian Schnabel. With Jeffrey Wright in the title role. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

Chain Reaction—The director of "The Fugitive," Andrew Davis, tries out another man-on-the-run action adventure, this time starring Keanu Reeves as—gulp—a whiz-kid scientist, fleeing from the government for something he didn't do. There's a little intrigue but no real urgency behind all the running and jumping around. The film could have used a Tommy Lee Jones character to goose up the chase; instead it has Morgan Freeman, as a government agent who's more supportive than antagonistic. The explosions are big and plentiful, and Davis is a good action craftsman, but the picture is unexceptional entertainment.—B.D. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace.)

Courage Under Fire—The issue in Edward Zwick's very sober and correct military drama is whether the medevac pilot Karen Walden (Meg Ryan), killed in action in the Gulf War, should be awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor; Denzel Washington, as the officer in charge of the investigation, has to sort out wildly divergent accounts of her behavior. Washington's thoughtful, delicately shaded performance holds the viewer's interest for a while, until the material's relentless lack of consequence finally overpowers him. The movie isn't a disgrace, but it doesn't deserve any medals.—T.R. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Waverly. . . . ¶ Coronet; through Aug. 15.)

Emma—Douglas McGrath wrote and directed this charming, wrongheaded version of Jane Austen's great comedy of manipulation. Gwyneth Paltrow plays the heroine; Toni Collette giggles and simpers as the impressionable Harriet; Alan Cumming is a deeply dorkish Mr. Elton; Ewan McGregor, last seen as a heroin addict in "Trainspotting," assumes the slightly more respectable role of Frank Churchill; and Jeremy Northam, leading man of "The Net," makes an absurdly young Mr. Knightley. He and Paltrow are a lovely couple, but McGrath replaces Austen's notion that love takes them by surprise—evolving, as it were, out of intellectual sparring—with easy romance. The film gleams with firelight and late-afternoon sun; there's no crispness to it, and Paltrow looks far too tender for the coolly calculating Emma Woodhouse. Ideal viewing for those who like to believe that Jane Austen was, above all, nice.—A.L. (8/5/96) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

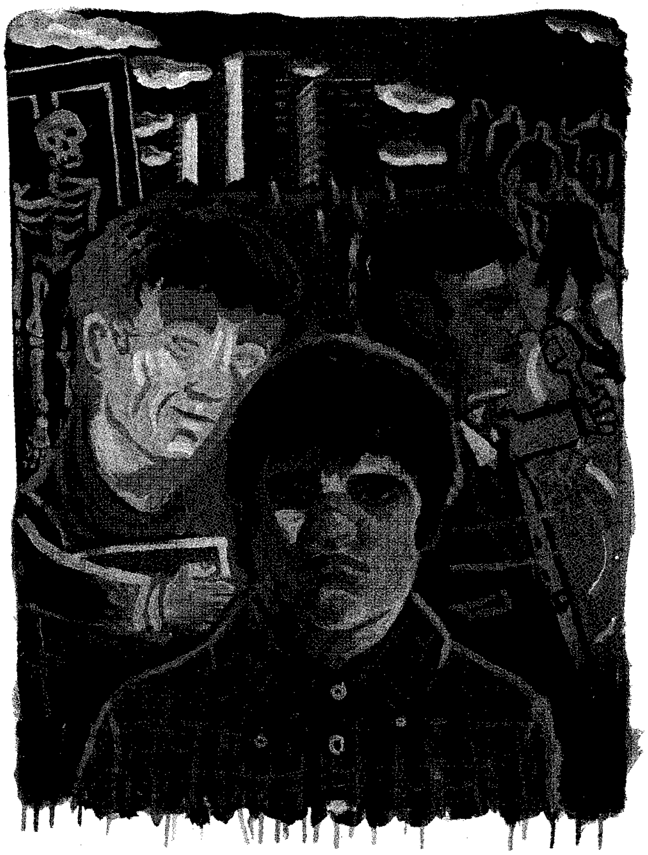
Independence Day—The big summer alien-invasion movie, in which the German director Roland Emmerich delivers the populist message that the land of the free is still a scrappy, defiant, can-do country. Bill Pullman plays the Clintonesque President; Jeff Goldblum has the geek-elegant role of a cable-television technician turned scientific savior; Will Smith is a Marine fighter pilot who captures the first alien with a punch to the head. At the end, millions are dead and the battered survivors stand around grinning as if they've just won a volleyball game. This shallowness is scarier than anything in the movie. The film gives the audience what it craves: spectacular nothing.—J.W. (7/15/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th St. East, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Jack—Francis Ford Coppola's cloying, vapid family film has Robin Williams playing a ten-year-old in a forty-year-old's body—he suffers from a mysterious malady that makes him age four times faster than other people. As if Williams's mugging and crying his way through two hours of a "Big" rip-off weren't enough, the filmmakers have cast Bill Cosby as his kindly tutor, and bathed the whole thing in syrupy golden light. Coppola, who can usually be relied on for a few wildly imaginative images even in his worst movies, directs in a style so flat and unfocussed it's as though he had never left his trailer. This is hackwork—the dullest movie he's ever made.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

John Carpenter's Escape from L.A.—Fifteen years after the science-fiction thriller "Escape from New York," Kurt Russell and John Carpenter return, to the tough-guy role of Snake and to the director's chair, respectively, for a West Coast sequel. (Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Kingpin—If you can accept Randy Quaid as an Amish farmhand, you're probably ready for this movie by the Farrelly brothers, who brought us "Dumb and Dumber." Representative gags include punching bosoms and trying to milk a bull. The plot turns on bowling skills: Quaid is a virtuoso plucked from obscurity by a one-handed has-been (Woody Harrelson) and trained to take on a conceited creep (Bill Murray). The outcome is predictable enough; the only surprises come from the Farrellys' eagerness to push the grossness quotient beyond all expectation. Their desire to make you grimace swamps their ability to make you laugh: the movie is simply not funny.—A.L. (8/5/96) (Art Greenwich Twin, 86th Street East Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, State, and 34th Street Showplace.)

Lone Star—The setting is Frontera, a small Texas town on the Mexican border, once policed by Sheriff Buddy Deeds (Matthew McConaughey) and now overseen by his son Sam (Chris Cooper). The writer-director, John Sayles, shifts between the two eras with gracious ease, linking them with an old crime—the unsolved and unmourned killing of Buddy's predecessor, Charley Wade (Kris Kristofferson), who held sway through bigotry and corruption. Thanks to Kristofferson's scary



Opening August 14, Joseph McFadden, Iain Robertson, and J. S. Duffy in "Small Faces."

RUSSELL CHRISTIAN

and unyielding performance, the murder mystery becomes the core of the film. Elsewhere you can sense the strain as Sayles works away at the generation gaps, but by the end you're grateful for the movie's weight and substance—rare virtues in a flimsy summer.—A.L. (7/8/96) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Manny & Lo—In writer-director Lisa Krueger's début film, two orphan sisters, the eleven-year-old Amanda (Scarlett Johansson) and the paranoid, bullying sixteen-year-old Laurel (Aleksa Palladino), escape from foster care and begin a life on the road, shoplifting and camping out in vacant suburban houses—searching, Krueger implies in the elliptical vernacular of independent films, for the stable home they never had. When Lo finds out she's pregnant, they kidnap a clerk from a baby-clothes store (Mary Kay Place) to help with the birth. Both young actresses are naturals (if a tad inexperienced to carry a movie), and Place, as a windbag in a white polyester uniform who fears that she's wanted for some Satanic ritual, is especially fun to watch. The film is too slight for its own good, though, like a charming but modest short story padded out to full novel length.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Matilda—Danny DeVito has taken Roald Dahl's children's book—in which most of the authority figures are bestial and some of the children are bratty—and constructed a wicked movie that may make parents squirm but should delight kids. Mara Wilson plays a precocious little girl who irritates her parents (DeVito and Rhea Perlman, both hilarious) because she'd rather read than watch TV. When they finally let her go to school, she meets her nemesis, Miss Trunchbull (Pam Ferris), a monstrous principal who shot-puts children out of windows. DeVito's punchy, throw-that-camera-across-the-room style of moviemaking is just right for this loud, sloppy story. He and his scriptwriters, Nicholas Kazan and Robin Swicord, deliver a flamboyantly obnoxious film that, like Jim Carrey at his best, empowers kids, subverting the usual Disney conventions and letting anarchy win the day.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Gemini, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Phenomenon—John Travolta plays George Malley, a regular-guy auto mechanic in rural California who looks up into the sky on his thirty-seventh birthday and is embraced by an intense light. Suddenly he's a genius, decoding secret Air Force messages, turning pig manure into fuel, and slowly, persistently winning the heart of Lace, a reclusive single mother (Kyra Sedgwick). Until the dénouement—a tearjerking piece of hagiography—it's surprisingly enjoyable, and Travolta's performance, a tour de force of clarity, conviction, economy of effort, and focussed will, is pretty close to genius. Jon Turteltaub directed.—S.K. (Cinema 3rd Avenue, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 3, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Village East Cinemas.)

Rendezvous in Paris—Eric Rohmer's latest, a trio of vignettes about lovers in the City of Light. In French. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Small Faces—This vibrant film by the Scottish brothers Billy and Gillies MacKinnon (they collaborated on the screenplay, with Gillies directing) has the kick and the gritty visual power of a "Mean Streets." The seemingly autobiographical story concerns the coming of age of three adolescent brothers (Iain Robertson, Joseph McFadden, and J. S. Duffy) involved with Glaswegian gangs in 1968. The camera work is grippingly intense—every gray, cobblestoned street looks menacing—and the little-known actors give nuanced, startling performances (Robertson, as the youngest brother, is devastatingly good). Despite a contrived happy ending, it's a wonder of a film.—B.D. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Quad Cinema; starting Aug. 14.)

A Time to Kill—Joel Schumacher's Deep South courtroom thriller has the solemn tone of a Stanley Kramer social-problem drama. The script—by Akiva Goldsman, from a John Grisham novel—follows a young white lawyer (Matthew McConaughey) as he defends a black man (Samuel L. Jackson) accused of murdering a couple of rednecks. The movie inflates Grisham's modest, perceptive portrait of a Mississippi town into a smug lecture on race relations; what the hero and all the other sweat-soaked characters really need is central air-conditioning, but what they get is an overpowering blast of homiletic hot air. Also with Sandra Bullock and Kevin Spacey.—T.R. (7/29/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Tin Cup—Ron Shelton's new movie is, of all things, a romantic comedy about golf. Kevin Costner plays Roy (Tin Cup) McAvoy, a once promising golfer who now runs a seedy West Texas driving range. The appearance at the lesson tee of a witty, leggy psychotherapist named Molly Griswold (Rene Russo) rouses him from his cozy stupor of underachievement: the way to impress her, he decides, is to qualify for the U.S. Open, and win it. His path to the Open is erratic, but his go-for-it style of courtship is mighty effective with Molly, who is unused to being gone for so recklessly. Shelton, who directed Costner in the 1988 baseball classic "Bull Durham," gets another terrific comic performance out of him here, and Russo makes a wonderful sparring partner. The movie is relaxed, funny, unpredictable, and very sexy. The sensational supporting cast includes Cheech Marin, Don Johnson, and Linda Hart. (A number of touring pros and golf broadcasters play themselves.) Screenplay by Shelton and John Norville.—T.R. (8/12/96) (Baronet, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII; starting Aug. 16.)

Trainspotting—Why should people looking for a good time see a film about skinny, cynical heroin addicts in Edinburgh? Because the junkies themselves are having such a good time that what sounds grungy and depressing turns out to be weirdly uplifting. The performances feel driven and unashamed, and though the film sells you short on plot, it makes you ravenous for the next visual fix. But in the end this approach becomes exhausting: you may yield to the film's verve while still praying that it will all be over soon. Directed by Danny Boyle; screenplay by John Hodge, from Irvine Welsh's novel.—A.L. (7/22/96) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, and State.)

The Wife—Repulsive. Tom Noonan, the writer and director, and Julie Hagerty team as Jack and Rita, pretentious New Agers who conduct group therapy in their rural home but can't face their own marital problems. When one of their clients, Cosmo (Wallace Shawn), arrives uninvited one evening with his sociopathic wife, Arlie (Karen Young, Noonan's real-life spouse), the four sit down to dinner; what follows is a "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" for therapists, right down to a late and ostensibly tragic revelation of childlessness. Jack, in a long gray beard and a floor-length dressing gown that make him look like Father Time, pretends to be soothing but takes secret joy in ignoring and degrading Rita. Arlie humiliates Cosmo and exposes her breasts (repeatedly) in mid-conversation. It's all supposed to be a sendup of New Age practices, but it's really no more than a portrait of two somewhat decent people married to reptiles.—S.K. (The Screening Room; starting Aug. 16.)

ALSO PLAYING

ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME: Lincoln Square. . . . **THE ARRIVAL:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE CABLE GUY** (reviewed in our issue of 7/8/96): Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CELESTIAL CLOCKWORK:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **COLD COMFORT FARM** (5/13/96): New York Twin and Regency. . . . **DRAGONHEART:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FARGO** (3/25/96): 59th Street East Cinema and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FLED:** Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and Orpheum VII. . . . **FLIRT:** Film Forum. . . . **THE FRIGHTENERS:** National Twin and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . **HEAVY** (6/17/96): Film Forum. . . . **THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME** (7/8/96): 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 4, and Sutton. . . . **JANE EYRE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE NUTTY PROFESSOR** (7/8/96): First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, National Twin, 19th Street East 6, and Orpheum VII. . . . **PURPLE NOON:** Paris and Quad Cinema. . . . **THE ROCK** (6/17/96): Embassy 4 and Sutton. . . . **STEALING BEAUTY** (6/10/96): Angelika 57, Baronet, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **STONEWALL:** Quad Cinema and 62nd & Broadway. . . . **SUPERCOP:** 84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 1, Embassy 2, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **TWISTER** (5/20/96): Manhattan Twin and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WALKING AND TALKING:** Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sutton. . . . **WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE** (5/27/96): Angelika Film Center and Cinema 3.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Baronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Castle on the Hudson (1940)—Uninspired remake of the 1933 prison melodrama "20,000 Years in Sing Sing." John Garfield has the Spencer Tracy part of the crude, cocky criminal, with Ann Sheridan stepping in for Bette Davis as the crook's girl. Garfield insisted on retaining the death-row finale—not a wise decision. The movie's attempt to salute Sing Sing's fair-minded, crusading warden (the ever-stolid Pat O'Brien) without relinquishing the audience's sympathy for its antihero results in a climactic orgy of nobility and self-sacrifice. Burgess Meredith commits the film's one virtuoso theft—with glittery-eyed panache he brings off the role of an educated con who's desperate to get out. Anatole Litvak directed; Seton I. Miller, Brown Holmes, and Courtney Terrett wrote the script, suggested by the memoirs of Warden Lewis E. Lawes. With Jerome Cowan as Garfield's shifty lawyer.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 15-16.)

Gentleman's Agreement (1947)—Compared with later message movies, with their screeching simplicities, this de-luxe adaptation of Laura Z. Hobson's novel about a Gentile writer (Gregory Peck) who poses as a Jew in order to expose anti-Semitism is refreshingly intelligent and complete, covering everything from country-club bigotry to Jewish timidity and self-hatred. To today's viewers, though, it may resemble "Black Like Me" less than it does the classic "Seinfeld" episode in which Jerry and George, mistaken for homosexuals, repeat, like a mantra, "Not that there's anything wrong with it." When the drama centers on the personal problems of fighting journalist Peck and his complacent-liberal fiancée Dorothy McGuire, his attack on her Wasp moral inertia obscures the big picture. But every time John Garfield, as Peck's Jewish best friend, shows up, the movie gets a recharge. He refuses to accept victim status ("The poor, poor Jews," he mutters) and challenges any affront to his manhood ("There's a kind of elation," he says, "about socking back"). He's even better than Peck when it comes to bullying McGuire over her can't-do ethics. And he's matched by the scintillating Celeste Holm, as a swift-tongued fashion editor: she makes intelligence so seductive that you root for Peck to wind up with *her.* Darryl F. Zanuck produced; Moss Hart wrote the screenplay; Elia Kazan directed (and wrote lucidly about the film in his autobiography, "A Life").—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 14.)

Humoresque (1946)—In this second version of Fannie Hurst's hokey weeper, the heroine (Joan Crawford) is myopic, dipsomaniacal, dissatisfied with her husband (Paul Cavanagh), older than her ghetto-born violinist lover (John Garfield), and given to brooding heavily about the futility of a life devoid of everything but sables, limousines, Napoleon brandy, town houses, seashore estates, and enough liquid assets to make a Morgan partner's eyes widen. When she realizes that her career as a social butterfly has not prepared her adequately to be the helpmate of her violinist, she bravely wades out into the ocean and gurgles to her doom. (The music that accompanies her demise is the "Liebestod" from "Tristan und Isolde.") Clifford Odets worked on the update, and some of the dialogue is sharp-witted, but if Carol Burnett were to step in and take over, she'd hardly have to change a thing. Garfield saws away impressively while Isaac Stern is heard playing several violin concertos. Jean Negulesco directed.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 17 and Aug. 19.)

Planet of the Apes (1968)—This is a slick commercial picture, but it's also one of the most entertaining science-fiction fantasies ever to come out of Hollywood. An American astronaut finds himself in the future, on a planet run by apes; the audience is rushed along with this hero, who keeps going as fast as possible to avoid being castrated or lobotomized. Charlton Heston is a godlike hero; built for strength, he represents American power—and he has the profile of an eagle. With Kim Hunter, Roddy McDowall, Maurice Evans, and James Whitmore. Franklin Schaffner directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Aug. 18-19.)

At the Walter Reade Theatre, Joan Crawford and John Garfield in "Humoresque."

ROBERT RISKO

This Island Earth (1955)—Yes, this is the Cold War sci-fi cult film that the self-infatuated wiseacres of "Mystery Science Theater 3000: The Movie" treated as "a stinking cinematic suppository." But viewed without the knee-jerk snickering of M.S.T. 3000's post-Letterman humor, this movie about two American scientists (Rex Reason and Faith Domergue) who get dragged into an interplanetary war boasts charm and intrigue; you can look at it both as square, unself-conscious camp and as a pipeline into fifties paranoia. It's more entertaining if you've read Raymond Durgnat's obsessive piece of pop criticism, "The Wedding of Poetry and Pulp," and its addendum, "Depth Psychology and Popular Cinema," in his 1967 book, "Films and Feelings." Durgnat makes a brilliant case for the movie as an expression of a sensibility—that of "the middle-class 'quiet American,' with his picture of himself as gentle, reasonable, liberal . . . until he finds an enemy." Joseph Newman directed; Franklin Coen and Edward G. O'Callaghan wrote the script.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 15 and Aug. 17.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Aug. 15: "Barbarella" (1968, Roger Vadim). . . . Aug. 16-17: "Queen of Outer Space" (1958, Edward Bernds) and "Forbidden Planet" (1956, Fred M. Wilcox). . . . Aug. 18-19: "Fantastic Voyage" (1966, Richard Fleischer) and "Planet of the Apes" (†). . . . Aug. 20: A program of coming attractions for more than fifty horror and sci-fi films.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—A program of recent films from Hong Kong, all in Cantonese. Aug. 14: "My Father Is a Hero" (Cory Yuen). . . . Aug. 15: "From Beijing with Love" (Wong Jing). . . . Aug. 16: "City Cop" (Herman Yau). . . . Aug. 17 and Aug. 20: "High Risk" (Jing). . . . Aug. 18: "The Saint of Gamblers" (Jing). . . . Aug. 19: "Wing Chun" (Yuen Wo-ping).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A showing of films from the museum's Martin Scorsese Collection. Aug. 15 at 2:30: "The Fly" (1958, Kurt Neumann). . . . Aug. 15 at 6 and Aug. 17 at 3: "This Island Earth" (†). . . . Aug. 15 at 8 and Aug. 17 at 12:30: "Thunderball" (1965, Terence Young). . . . Aug. 16 at 2:30 and Aug. 18 at 12:30: "You Only Live Twice" (1967, Lewis Gilbert). . . . Aug. 16 at 6: "Goldfinger" (1964, Guy Hamilton). . . . Aug. 16 at 8 and Aug. 19 at 2:30: "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms' (1953, Eugene Lourie). . . . Aug. 17 at 5 and Aug. 20 at 2:30: "City Under the Sea" (1965, Jacques Tourneur). . . . Aug. 18 at 3: "The Incredible Shrinking Man" (1957, Jack Arnold). . . . Aug. 18 at 5: "Journey to the Center of the Earth" (1959, Henry Levin). . . . Aug. 19 at 6: "Jason and the Argonauts" (1963, Don Chaffey). . . . Aug. 20 at 6: "The House of Usher" (1960, Roger Corman).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—A program of films starring John Garfield. Aug. 14 at 2 and 6: "Dust Be My Destiny" (1939, Lewis Seiler). . . . Aug. 14 at 3:45 and 7:45: "Gentleman's Agreement" (†). . . . Aug. 15 at 2 and 9 and Aug. 16 at 3:40 and 7:40: "Pride of the Marines" (1945, Delmer Daves). . . . Aug. 15 at 4:15 and Aug. 16 at 2, 6, and 10: "Castle on the Hudson" (†). . . . Aug. 17 at 4 and 8:30 and Aug. 19 at 4:30 and 9: "The Breaking Point" (1950, Michael Curtiz). . . . Aug. 17 at 6 and Aug. 19 at 2 and 6:30: "Humoresque" (†): . . Aug. 18 at 4 and 8:15: "The Sea Wolf" (1941, Curtiz). . . . Aug. 18 at 6: "Tortilla Flat" (1942, Victor Fleming). . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 6:30: "The Delicate Art of the Rifle" (1995, D. W. Harper). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Aug. 17-18 at 2: "On the Riviera" (1951, Walter Lang).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—A program of films directed by Stanley Kubrick. Aug. 17 at 2 and 5: "2001: A Space Odyssey" (1968). . . . Aug. 18 at 2: "Killer's Kiss" (1955). . . . Aug. 18 at 3:30: "The Killing" (1956).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Aug. 20 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "The Red and the Black" (1954, Claude Autant-Lara; in French).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes, coming attractions, and newsreels. The feature on Aug. 19 will be "Rio Bravo" (1959, Howard Hawks). (Rain date is the following night.)

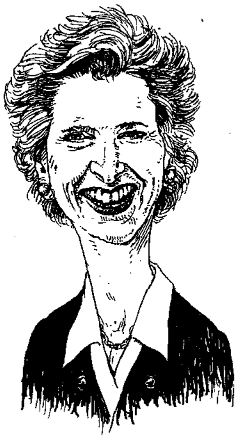
Film al Fresco, at Le Madri Restaurant, 168 W. 18th St. (727-8022)—Sunday evenings, more films out-of-doors, with food and live music beginning at 6 and the movie starting at about 8:30. On Aug. 18, the feature will be "Blazing Saddles" (1974, Mel Brooks). (Rain date is the following night.)

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films. On Aug. 18 at 7, the feature will be "The Poseidon Adventure" (1972, Ronald Neame).

THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

DOLE GETS WHITMANESQUE


Christine Whitman

THE true inspiration for Bob Dole's decision to make income-tax cuts the cornerstone of his Presidential campaign is not Ronald Reagan (who, after all, cut taxes only to run up a huge budget deficit). It's Governor Christine Todd Whitman, of New Jersey. In her gubernatorial race, three years ago, she, too, was trailing badly. Then she promised massive income-tax cuts, won the election going away, and delivered on the cuts while keeping a balanced budget—all of which is such a perfect model for what Dole wants that one would almost expect him to show up at the Republican Convention this week in a blond wig and bright-green separates from Talbots.

Dole's situation is a little trickier than Whitman's was, of course. Her cuts came to $1.2 billion. His would come to an estimated $548 billion, and it is safe to assume that Beltway budget-watchers won't be as complaisant as those in Trenton. But the basic steps of the Whitman budget waltz are the same on any stage, and if Dole watches her closely in San Diego he should be able to master the moves: Be gentle. Keep your back straight. Lead without steering. And, when you are trying to find the money to pay for tax cuts, for heaven's sake don't be too obvious about it.

One of the first things that Whitman did after her election, for example, was to make a series of complicated actuarial changes to the state's pension fund, which no one particularly understood but which had the effect of conjuring up about a billion dollars a year and perhaps forwarding the bill to taxpayers twenty and thirty years from now. "It's like a mortgage," points out Bernard F. Kenny, Jr., who is the ranking Democrat on the New Jersey State Senate's Budget and Appropriations Committee. "If you pay in less now, it just means you have to pay in more later." She raised fees for state services, which no one much noticed. She cut the amount of aid that the state gives to many municipalities, leaving local governments to decide whether to forgo services or to raise property taxes to make up the difference. This year, she took about eight hundred million dollars that had been intended for specific projects—like the educational-facilities fund and the temporary-disability-insurance fund—and slyly put the money into the general revenue. And, just so that no one would think that she couldn't make a tough decision, she turned off fifty-five hundred lights on streets, above highway signs, and at freeway interchanges throughout New Jersey.

All in all, this last economy saves only four hundred and seventy thousand dollars a year, but it has struck just the right note of no-nonsense Waspy frugality, like turning down the thermostat in the winter and wearing a heavy sweater, or giving up an extravagant night out in favor of a game of charades. In New Jersey, taxpayers are reminded of the meaning of lean and limited government every time they try to drive down a highway at night. If Dole truly is Christie Whitman, he is probably considering the same ideas himself. Turn off the lights at the White House swimming pool? Or how about hitting the dimmer switch on the dining-room chandelier? Better to blow out a candle than to curse the deficit.

HONKY-TONK WONK

THE faint spires and spanking mirrors of Nashville's pleading skyline reflect off Bob Titley's tortoiseshell glasses as he sits at his desk near Music Row and stares into the screen of his laptop computer. "I've got, let's see, one, two, three . . . twelve computers," says Titley, who manages the country-folk stalwart Kathy Mattea and the boot-skootin' hot shots Brooks & Dunn. "Ten at the office, two at home." In the evenings, the forty-one-year-old, prep-school-dishevelled Titley, who was recently named one of the most eligible and "mysterious" bachelors in Music City, leaves his unadorned office, heads to his unadorned home, near tony Belle Meade ("It's my trademark not to have anything on my walls. I'm afraid of commitment"), and plays on-line simulated Second World War flying games. Back at work, he feeds a diet of statistics into his gluttonous hard drive and sets about analyzing the data. "What I do is the blue-collar work of the industry," he says. "I go in every day with a pick and shovel, and shovel as much information as I can into the file of my artist."

In the past few months, Titley and other members of Nashville's new wonk élite have drawn the attention of another audience hoping to tap into the possibilities of country music and its New South constituency: the Democratic Party. The relationship has already borne fruit, as Titley helped drum up talent for President Clinton's birthday bash this Sunday. Republicans, for their part, have been playing hillbilly for years. Richard Nixon, trying to escape Watergate, opened the new Grand Ole Opry, in 1974, by playing "God Bless

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JARRETT HUDDLESTON

America" on the piano. George Bush attended the industry's annual awards show in 1991. "Everybody was all gaga over Bush being there," Titley says. "I wanted to get a nine-inch pin that said, 'Last of the living liberals.' There is a long tradition of liberalism in country music, from Woody Guthrie to the coal-mine protest songs. The whole sense of the little guy—the farmer, the rural laborer—fighting big-business interests. All the Southeastern audience for country music comes out of the Appalachian tradition, and big-government, New Deal programs have done a lot for people in those areas."

That liberal economic tradition, Titley believes, was supplanted in the nineteen-sixties, when Republicans began exploiting conservative social issues to capture the hearts of country's traditional fans, many of whom were turned off by the Vietnam-era protests. Today, with country having all but abandoned its rural past for the more lucrative spoils of middle-class suburbia, a new strand of social liberalism is beginning to emerge. Kathy Mattea, for one, led early efforts to raise AIDS awareness. Garth Brooks has advocated gay rights. The Republican takeover of Congress only heightened the urge to speak out. "Suddenly," says Titley, who grew up in Dallas, "we had more of a desire to say, 'Wait a minute. We have Southern sensibilities, too, but we don't believe in some of these conservative principles.' "

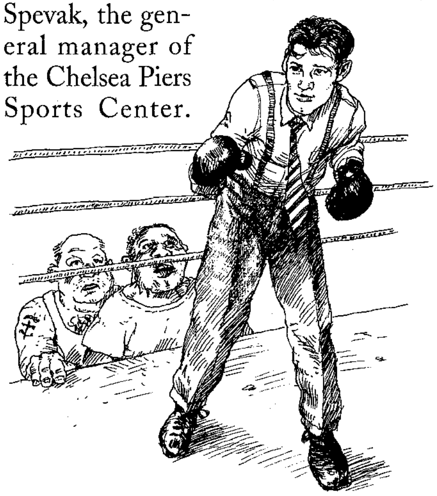
Though it took the Democrats a while to catch on, they finally sent an emissary earlier this year to sound out the community. A get-to-know-you session was set up between native son Al Gore and seventy Music Row bigwigs. "What the politicians do is elementally the same thing we're doing," Titley says. "Instead of a hit song, they have a hit speech. Instead of a hook, they have a sound bite." And, he says, both sides deal with the same market: "adult Middle America."

Ironically, considering his prowess at analyzing that market, Titley sees Nashville's current situation, with creativity (and sales) beginning to suffer under the weight of too much research, as a blunt warning to politicians. "The political process is reacting to what the surveys say adult Middle America wants, and it's that cycle of feedback—just like we have in country music—that's creating all the fluff out there," he says. "Someday, somewhere, somehow, somebody with a compelling voice is going to propel public opinion in a certain direction. And it's not going to come from reading the polls. Breakthroughs come from *not* reading the research. They come from listening to yourself."

GLOBAL SHVITZING

BRUCE SILVERGLADE has lost his windows. Gleason's, his Brooklyn gym, which was Jake La Motta's alma mater in its early Bronx days and remains the only boxing gym with a Virgil quotation next to an N.Y.P.D. recruitment poster, has shrunk. But the excision of Silverglade's corner office is actually a sign of growth. It is Phase I of a scheme that will soon spatter Silverglade's boxing empire all over the world, like blood from a loser's eye.

Last week, surrounded by sixty years of Gleason's memorabilia in boxes, Silverglade sat in his corner office for the final time. He was matchmaking fights for August 20th, the day before his fiftieth birthday, and the day of the first Madison Square Garden boxing event since the Riddick Bowe–Andrew Golota bout that leaked into the audience. These days, Silverglade is matchmaking for himself, too. He is about to mix it up with Harvey Spevak, the general manager of the Chelsea Piers Sports Center.



"I get to keep my gym here *and* have a presence in Manhattan," Silverglade said. "It's the best of both worlds." Both worlds is exactly right. Nowadays, wherever boxing exists there's a parallel boxing universe in apposition: pugilism versus white-collar boxing; men's boxing and women's boxing; riots at the Garden and polite applause at the Olympics. And soon there'll be Gleason's straight up and Gleason's spritzer. At Gleason's Gym at Chelsea Piers, which opens September 1st, there will be twenty-four-hour sparring and an arena staging "future champions" bouts, which will be beamed live to a European cable channel. "It's the white-collar business we're after," Silverglade said. "White-collar boxing's not a fad, like step dancing. Businessmen and attorneys have always been interested in getting the condition and fitness of boxers, but they didn't necessarily want to walk up the stairs into this environment."

This environment was particularly raw last week, with the gym's unpainted interior reflected clearly in the wobbly shadow-boxing mirror. "You can't be a fighter and not go to a fight gym," Silverglade said. "When Strykers opened its beautiful facility, some of my fighters went off there, but they all came filtering back. They said, 'Hey, you don't *sweat* in that gym.' "

So come September fighters will stay in Brooklyn, while fitness fiends and dilettantes will want to go to Chelsea. In October, further phases of the Gleason's global plan will begin to go into effect, with outposts in Liverpool and London joining one in Rotterdam, and, in February, a public stock offering. Meanwhile, Silverglade will have moved into his new office, whose only window overlooks the antediluvian weights area, which has been reupholstered in canary-yellow vinyl. The corner office will soon become part of a Reebok store, with a glass wall "so customers can look in and peek at us," Silverglade said. One window closes, another opens.

THE LATEST SNUB

HOLLYWOOD neologisms are seldom truly useful. The famous "take a meeting," for instance, adds nothing to the language that "have a meeting" didn't already provide. But the latest hot phrase to emerge from the film industry may well prove indispensable. "Whatever with that" connotes dismissal along with vast world-weariness: it indicates that the idea just presented is not only infeasible but that further exposure to the sensibility that came up with it may send the listener into an intractable stupor. Let us say that you have a role that cries out for Brad Pitt and an agent suggests Randy Quaid; or that you have invented a character who's an angry Vietnam vet and the story executive suggests that he be an android from the year 2135. In cases such as these, you deploy a mild snort and say, "Whatever with that." An accompanying upward roll of the eyes is considered piquant. ♦

"Dole Gets Whitmanesque," Malcolm Gladwell; "Honky-Tonk Wonk," Bruce Feiler; "Global Shvitzing," Kate Sekules; "The Latest Snub," Stephen Schiff.

KATHRYN HARRISON
AUTHOR OF *EXPOSURE*

POISON

In a time of terror and superstition, two young women live secret lives dedicated to resistance and love.

Photo: Joyce Ravid

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REPORT FROM GAZA

THE QUANDARY

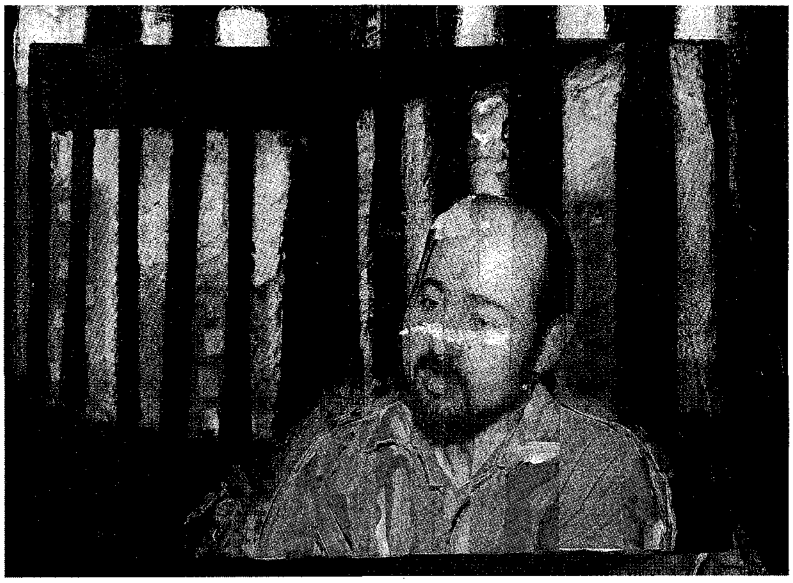
The political leader of Hamas sits in a Manhattan jail cell awaiting possible extradition to Israel. But do the Israelis really want him?

BY MARY ANNE WEAVER

Dr. Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook is an extraordinarily cautious man who seems to have a gift for anonymity. He is of medium height, is average in build, and has short dark hair and a trim dark beard. His daily life had always been well ordered, punctilious, leaving nothing to chance; he was a man who considered his every movement, his every action, painstakingly in advance. Thus, when he arrived at John F. Kennedy Airport in July of last year he anticipated no problems, he told me a few weeks ago. He had, after all, flown in and out of the airport countless times over the past thirteen years. He was a permanent resident of the United States, a prosperous forty-four-year-old businessman who was about to become eligible for citizenship. Everything about him seemed unremarkable.

He first arrived in this country in 1982, on a student visa, and he renewed the visa without issue over the next decade, during which time he earned a Ph.D. in engineering from Louisiana's Columbia State University. He appeared to favor America's small towns, and during his student years he travelled around Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida, spending extended periods in university towns, where those who remember him, if they remember him at all, present a fleeting sketch of a man: soft-spoken and gracious, polite to an almost otherworldly degree. Then, in 1991, leaving the Deep South behind, he moved into an upper-middle-class Virginia neighborhood, equally distant from the lush hunt country and Washington, D.C. And there he lived for the next four years, comfortably and quietly.

As Abu Marzook approached the immigration counter, with his wife and six children, there was little to distinguish him from the scores of other Arab businessmen on his plane—a British Airways flight that had originated in the United Arab Emirates and then had stopped in London before reaching J.F.K. It was hot and humid in the immigration lounge, and an Immigration and Naturalization Service inspector smiled at him languidly and said, "Welcome to the United States."



Dr. Abu Marzook: What was he doing in the United States for thirteen years?

MCDAVID HENDERSON

Abu Marzook smiled. "It's good to be home again."

The I.N.S. official, taking the man's passport (a Yemeni passport) and his United States green card, perfunctorily called up a computerized database—an I.N.S. watch list of hundreds of names of persons believed to be involved in terrorist acts. He looked at Abu Marzook, startled. He checked the computer again. The name on the passport and the green card and the name on the computer matched.

For the next twelve hours, Abu Marzook, his wife, Nadia, and all six of their children were held incommunicado at J.F.K., and, according to their lawyer, his wife and daughter were strip-searched. Meanwhile, in Washington an abiding worry—spliced with chaos and confusion—began to take shape. According to United States and Israeli officials, Mousa Abu Marzook is the head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, which is the militant Palestinian group that bitterly opposes the Palestinian-Israeli peace accords. Hamas has claimed credit for a number of brutal terrorist acts—including three of four suicide bombings in Israel this spring—that not only have taken some two hundred lives but have, in effect, played a major role in derailing the Middle East peace process and contributed as well to the electoral victory, in May, of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his new, hard-line Israeli government. Furthermore, the Israelis charge that, as one of the most senior policymakers of Hamas, Abu Marzook cannot be dissociated from the organization's military wing, the Izz el-Din Qassem Brigades, because, they say, he participated in discussions that forged Hamas's strategy and sanctioned its terrorist attacks. However, according to some close students of Hamas, including a number of American academics, Abu Marzook is more akin to Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein, the Irish Republican Army's political wing; he is, in effect, Hamas's Foreign Minister, its pragmatic public face, and a key fund-raiser, who is equally at home with militants and mullahs, with Islamic scholars, retired fighters from the Palestine Liberation Organization, and chiefs of state abroad.

The conflicting images are, in a sense, emblematic of the quandary of Israeli, Palestinian, and United States officials over how to deal with Hamas, a largely secretive and highly contradictory organization, whose orphanages and mosques are no less integral a part of its mystique than are suicide bombs. A deliberately nebulous chain of command has made it impossible to penetrate, and Israeli officials acknowledge that they know little about its operating methods, its hierarchy, or the relationship between its political and its military wings.

But, in the days following Abu Marzook's detention at J.F.K., bewildered United States officials had a far more basic concern. "The problem, from the beginning, has essentially been: now that we have him, what do we do with him?" one investigator told me. A task force was hastily assembled, and Abu Marzook was detained on a minor immigration charge and dispatched to the maximum-security ward of the Metropolitan Correctional Center, in downtown Manhattan, and there he has remained—in solitary confinement—ever since. The I.N.S. began proceedings to expel him from the United States, and the Justice Department ordered an investigation into his activities, in an attempt to determine whether he had broken any American laws. As United States investigators scrambled to find grounds for indicting him, tempers became more and more frayed, and they relied increasingly on Israel and Jordan—neither of which had ever brought any charges against Abu Marzook—to provide information on which they could build a case. (A year later, Justice Department officials, after interviewing hundreds of people and conducting exhaustive searches of their files, told me that their own investigation produced no results other than intelligence information provided by the Israelis.)

"When was Abu Marzook placed on the United States terrorist list?" I asked a number of I.N.S. officials during one particularly frustrating afternoon of telephone calls remarkable for their circularity. One official said that the list was "highly classified" and that its confidentiality was critical to its success.

"Which government agency put him on the list?" I asked.

"There were a couple of entries, in the first quarter of 1995," another official finally responded. "No reason was given." That was all he would say.

The Justice Department, the I.N.S.,

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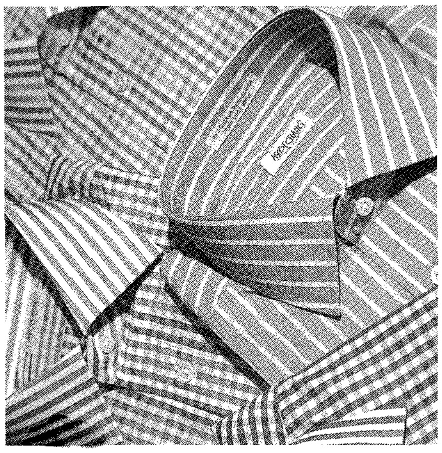

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the Treasury Department, the F.B.I., and the Internal Revenue Service all scrambled about in their own areas of jurisdiction, sometimes colliding with one another, but the most determined effort to do something about Abu Marzook was being made by the State Department and by the C.I.A. For, despite the fact that the United States government appears to have surprisingly limited information on Hamas—an organization with deep roots, an international support network, and a popular base that permeates the Palestinian landscape—a handful of officials in both agencies knew precisely who Abu Marzook was. Within forty-eight hours of his arrest, they began placing calls to their opposite numbers in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

It took more than a week for a decision to be made—and the debates accompanying it were sometimes intense, always divisive—but ultimately a skeptical Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, requested that Abu Marzook be extradited to Israel to stand trial for murder and conspiracy. The decision was greeted in Washington with relief. In Israel, however, it was accompanied by open anxiety over the political cost of prosecuting an almost unknown man and by uncertainty about whether he would be convicted in the end. To meet the terms of the United States–Israeli extradition treaty, Israel would have to convince authorities in the United States that Abu Marzook committed—or colluded in—specific crimes, and, as Israel's Justice Minister pointed out in the Knesset nearly a year ago, during the extradition debate, "the head of an organization generally doesn't go out and commit terrorist acts himself. He generally works to raise money, to recruit men, to give directives. This makes it difficult to connect him with particular acts."

In May, a judge in a Manhattan court concluded that there was "probable cause" to believe that Abu Marzook was linked to bombings in Israel, but he immediately stayed his ruling, as Abu Marzook's lawyers filed an appeal. (Even if the appeal fails, the State Department may in the end elect to deny the extradition request.)

Meanwhile, the questions remain: Why did one of the most influential leaders of Hamas spend more than a decade living quietly and anonymously in the United States? Was he a key fund-raiser, as the Israelis claim, who channelled millions of dollars to Hamas each year? How extensive is the Hamas infrastructure in this country, and what does it do?

RAFA, a city on the southern tip of Gaza, is a desolate and melancholy place. (Gaza itself is home to some million Palestinians, nearly all of them poor and powerless refugees.) Its simple houses, built of concrete blocks and chaff, line a labyrinth of open sewers and muddy lanes spilling out from the city's dominant structure: a sprawling refugee camp. It was here that Mousa Abu Marzook was born, in 1951, into a family that was poor but prized education above all. His father, Mohammed, told me, when I visited in July, "In a place like Rafa, you have only two weapons—an education or a gun."

Rafa has long been a bastion of Islamic militancy, and it was in its mosques, in its social centers, and on its playing fields that Abu Marzook came of age, first dabbling in Islamic politics, which, considering the times, were fairly mild; they consisted largely of writing anti-Israeli tracts. Then, in December of 1987, when the intifada, the Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation, began, he became deeply involved, coördinating policy on the ground but, most important, channelling funds both into the intifada itself and to the families of those imprisoned as a consequence of it. Hamas was born, at the end of 1987, out of the intifada in Gaza, and from the start Abu Marzook was a commanding presence in it.

Armed not only with weapons but with an impressive and continually expanding array of charitable organizations and a network of schools, health clinics, and community centers, Hamas has targeted not only Israel and the peace accords, which for an increasing number of Palestinians have brought none of the promised rewards, but an increasingly weakened Yasir Arafat as well. Arafat, for his part, along with his Palestinian Authority, which grew out of the peace accords, has vacillated between cracking down and negotiating with Hamas, in an attempt to co-opt its religious and civilian side, thus isolating its militants. By the time of my visit, Rafa, like the rest of Gaza and the West Bank, had been sealed off in a punishing Israeli blockade for four months—a direct result of Hamas's suicide bombings in Israel this spring, which, in a senseless cycle of violence and revenge, had occurred in retaliation for the assassination in Gaza last January of Hamas's military leader, Yahya Ayyash, presumably by the Israeli security service, Shin Bet.

The Abu Marzook family home, a whitewashed stucco bungalow, is on the edge of Rafa's refugee camp. "He was born right here in this house," Abu Marzook's mother, Miriam, told me before I could even ask about her son. A large woman in her seventies, dressed in a black caftan of intricate brocade, with a scarf covering her head, she went on to explain that Mousa was the second youngest of her nine children and, as a consequence, was one of only two who were not born in the old family house, in the village of Yebna (now in central Israel), or in the Rafa refugee camp.

In 1967, during the Six-Day War, when the Israeli Army swept through Rafa, overwhelming the tiny Gaza Strip, Mousa's eldest brother, Mahmud Abu Marzook, joined the fighting, and became a major in a group of irregular forces, which later formed a forward fighting unit of the P.L.O. Mousa, then sixteen, instead went to the mosque. Mahmud was captured and was imprisoned by the Israelis for eight months; Mousa read the Koran. Today, Brigadier Mahmud is the head of Arafat's Civil Defense Department, and Mousa is precisely the kind of man that a leading official in the Palestinian Authority is supposed to rein in.

"Mahmud was the fighter in our family," his father, Mohammed, said. "Mousa has never used a gun—not during the occupation, not during the intifada, not even to protect himself. Perhaps the fact that they're twelve years apart accounts for the difference. Mahmud was six when we were forced to flee Yebna"—in 1948, during the first Arab-Israeli war—"and he remembers it. He remembers what we left behind—the small stone house, the four acres of land. To this day, I still remember the dewdrops on the trees. But Mousa knew none of that. He knew only the misfortune that later became our life."

"Is your family particularly political?" I asked.

"Good heavens, no," he replied. A small man of eighty-six, Mohammed was dressed in a long white djellabah and wore a brown crocheted prayer cap. "We're so apolitical that we don't even read the newspapers." He added, "Of course, my wife and I can't read!" He chuckled, and then said, with pride, "But, in spite of that, we've produced one Ph.D., one medical doctor, and one brigadier." All but two of his children have university degrees.

As we talked, a picture began to emerge of the Abu Marzooks' youngest and most favored son: a man who was most effective behind the scenes, where he used to good effect his diplomacy, his charm, and his intelligence. Until his arrest at J.F.K., neither Mohammed nor Miriam nor anyone else beyond a handful of people knew how significant Mousa Abu Marzook's role in Hamas was.

"When I grow up, I hope to spoil someone's bid for the Presidency."

THAT role began, in a sense, when Abu Marzook, as a teen-ager, frequented the Rafa refugee camp, for it was there that he was introduced to Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a charismatic cleric and a quadriplegic. He had received a Ph.D. from Cairo's distinguished University of al-Azhar and, while there, had become a member of the secret leadership of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood is the oldest and most moderate of today's militant Islamist groups, and, although its philosophy has always carried the potential for violence, it has preached jihad in only the mildest way; the first task of its followers is to change society, through the establishment or infiltration of social structures and the control of mosques. All of this seemed quite innocuous to the Israelis in Gaza, as did Sheikh Yassin, and, beginning in the nineteen-seventies, Israel not only allowed the Islamic movement to flourish but even covertly supported it. Far more fearful of the secular P.L.O., the Israelis saw the Islamists as a perfect instrument for their policy of divide and rule. They regret that erroneous assumption now.

Sheikh Yassin and the Islamists, for their part, accepted aid from whatever quarter offered it. Under the watchful eye of Israeli occupation troops, they built hundreds of schools, health clinics, community centers, and sports clubs. Between 1967 and 1987, the number of mosques tripled in Gaza and doubled on the West Bank, helped along by funding from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel. While Sheikh Yassin expanded his infrastructure, his young protégé Mousa Abu Marzook was completing his bachelor's degree in engineering at Cairo University. The years he spent there, from 1970 to 1976, proved to be a turning point: with the encouragement of the Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, Egypt's own Islamic groups were beginning to thrive, and Abu Marzook proved extremely adept at riding the new Islamist wave.

Thus, in 1976, when he left Cairo for oil-rich Abu Dhabi, to work as an engineer, he was already a recognized young leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. And, two years after that, when the Israelis—having consistently turned down appeals from secularists and academics to establish a university in the Gaza Strip—gave a wink and a nod to the Islamists as they opened the extremely well-funded and technologically advanced Islamic University of Gaza, Mousa Abu Marzook was one of fifteen members of the board.

He had used his years in Abu Dhabi to hone his diplomatic skills, as he travelled throughout the Middle East, moving easily and astutely through the politically powerful and financially viable worlds of the Muslim Brotherhood. He cultivated old friendships and made new ones, with politically prominent men, never losing sight of his ultimate goal: the establishment on Palestinian territory of an independent Islamist state. By the time of his arrival in the United States in 1982, Abu Marzook was a man who wielded considerable political power as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood; and, five years later, when Sheikh Yassin and a handful of other clerics founded Hamas—under the umbrella of the Muslim Brotherhood—Mousa Abu Marzook became its leading political voice. "From its inception, Hamas was far better organized, much better funded, and far more disciplined than the P.L.O. ever was," a Western diplomat in Jerusalem told me over tea, "and it has proved far more difficult for the Israelis to understand. By its very nature, as an underground group, it, and particularly its military arm, maintains the utmost security and secrecy. Its actual fighters probably don't exceed a hundred or so, grouped in small, amorphous cells, but little is known about how they interact with each other or with the political command. They have truly stumped the Israelis, and, of course, the lingering paradox is that the Israelis, in a sense, created them."

By 1989, the Israelis had had enough: Sheikh Yassin was arrested and sent to an Israeli jail, and has remained there ever since. Later that year, Abu Marzook returned to Gaza and the West Bank, travelling under the name Abu Omar, and effectively took over the leadership of Hamas, not just expanding it but virtually reinventing it—turning it into the powerful and well-financed organization that it now is. When its Political Bureau was established, in 1992, he became its head, overseeing its operations from a quiet, tree-lined street in Springfield, Virginia. He conducted his business from the United Association for Studies and Research, which Israeli defense sources claim is a Hamas front. (The association denies any links to Hamas.)

A year later, following the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, the Izz el-Din Qassem Brigades accelerated their operations, to deadly effect, launching a wave of suicide bombings, kidnappings, and ambushes inside Israel. In three years, these outrages have already claimed considerably more Israeli lives than the intifada, which lasted nearly a decade. For both Hamas and the Israelis, the stakes have been appreciably raised.

In 1991, Abu Marzook began holding secret talks with officials of the United States government. Both the Israelis and the P.L.O. were furious. "It was the Americans who came to us," Imad Falouji, whom Abu Marzook had appointed to head Hamas in the Gaza Strip, told me one evening, as we sat on the terrace of a West Bank hotel. Falouji left Hamas earlier this year to stand in Palestinian elections, which were boycotted by Hamas—a boycott that seventy-five per cent of the electorate ignored. He is now Minister of Communications in Arafat's government, but he remains friendly with Hamas. "It was just before the Mideast peace talks opened in Madrid. The intifada was at its height, and Hamas's support inside the Occupied Territories was more than forty per cent. We were a key player, and the Americans realized this. At the beginning, they simply wanted us to explain our policy, what we stood for, and who we were. The talks started in Jordan, at the American Consulate in Amman, and it was Abu Marzook who began the dialogue."

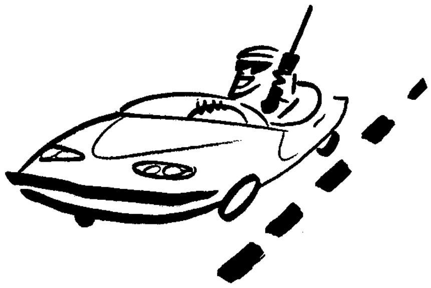
"How long did the talks last?"

"For Abu Marzook, four years. His last meeting was in 1995, at the State Department in Washington. Later, inexplicably, the Americans arrested him."

Falouji described Abu Marzook as "pragmatic and very much of a moderate," and went on to say, "That's one of the reasons the Americans were so fond of him—and the British, the Germans, and the Scandinavians. He met with them all. He was actually the first person in Hamas to call for a ceasefire with Israel, and he tacitly recognized Israel's right to exist six months before Yasir Arafat and the P.L.O. did."

I had been told earlier, by an Israeli military source, that Abu Marzook's last meeting with the Americans had been attended by representatives of the F.B.I. I asked Falouji what he knew about that.

"Absolutely not," he responded, seeming to bristle. "Mousa actually had a series of meetings at that time, and some members of Congress did sit in on at least one of them. It lasted for four hours, and Mousa was extremely pleased. He explained Hamas's conditions for entering into a dialogue with Israel, and he also explained the problems we were having with the Palestinian Authority. It was arresting us in waves, closing our mosques, threatening our schools. The Israelis were insisting that we be totally crushed, regardless of the cost. This was also the time of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman's trial in New York, and Abu Marzook went to great lengths to assure the Americans that we had no involvement in any of the Sheikh's activities." A senior P.L.O. official told me later that Hamas had also pledged not to conduct any operations against the United States.



"Did the Americans ask anything of Hamas?" I asked Falouji.

"Yes," he replied. "To scale down our fund-raising in the United States."

The question of how significant the Hamas infrastructure is in this country has bedevilled, and divided, Israel and the United States for the past three years. The differences between the two sides were revealed, in almost embarrassing clarity, in January of 1993, when the Israelis arrested, on the West Bank, Mohammed Abdel Hamid Salah, a Palestinian-American used-car salesman from Chicago, who they claim is a leading figure in the military leadership of Hamas. Under interrogation, Salah sketched a Hamas network in the United States stretching from Chicago, Detroit, and Dallas to New York and the affluent suburbs of Virginia. Salah, who, according to Israeli defense officials, was carrying five hundred thousand dollars in cash at the time of his arrest, said that he had been given the money by Hamas's United States leader, Mousa Abu Marzook, and had received specific orders from him to use part of the cash to buy weapons, to recruit trainees and train them in explosive techniques, and to underwrite Hamas's military operations generally. (His allegations—along with bank records that document transfers of hundreds of thousands of dollars from Abu Marzook's account to Salah's—form the core of the Israeli extradition case against Abu Marzook.)

From the beginning, American officials viewed Salah's confession skeptically. "He made the statements under extreme duress," one United States investigator told me. "He may have been subjected to physical pressure—at least, he claims he was. The confession he signed was in Hebrew, which he does not understand, and, in the end, he retracted it. There was obviously a plea bargain involved, for Salah got only five years. His 'evidence' is very, very shaky. I would be astonished if it would stand up in a United States court."

In Tel Aviv, an Israeli defense official said to me, "In the past, when Abu Marzook was in the United States, the infrastructure there was extremely important for Hamas. America was one of Hamas's focal points. The Political Bureau's activities were *run* from the United States, and, as a policymaker, Abu Marzook was key. The Political Bureau is Hamas's Politburo, and its leadership is small: ten to twelve people. Abu Marzook is a charismatic, ambitious guy who consolidated a lot of power in his own hands. But did he go out and tell a kid to strap himself to a bomb? That is something that, unfortunately, we simply don't know."

He paused for a moment, and then went on, "The United States was also very important for Hamas not only for raising funds but—what counted even more—for laundering funds. Vast amounts of money passed through United States banks and ended up in the coffers of Hamas, either through its front organizations or through legitimate United States operations of the Muslim Brotherhood. Most of the money came from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, via offshore bank accounts and Swiss bank accounts, and also from legitimate business operations in the Gulf. Now the importance of the United States is declining, but Hamas continues to have a number of fronts there. The Palestinian equivalent of the I.R.A.'s Noraid is the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, and there is also the Islamic Association for Palestine." (Officials from both groups, which have offices in Richardson, Texas, deny any links to Hamas.)

The official went on to say that the Israelis believed that perhaps between ten and fifteen per cent of Hamas's annual budget, of some seventy million dollars, came from America, and he then expressed the dilemma of law-enforcement officials in both Israel and the United States: the line between support for Hamas's legitimate charities and support for its military operations is extremely ill defined. According to Israel's assessment, perhaps ninety-five per cent of the budget goes for charitable activities. "And the irony of this is that it's precisely these charities which have provided Hamas with its base, and constitute the bedrock of its support," the offi-

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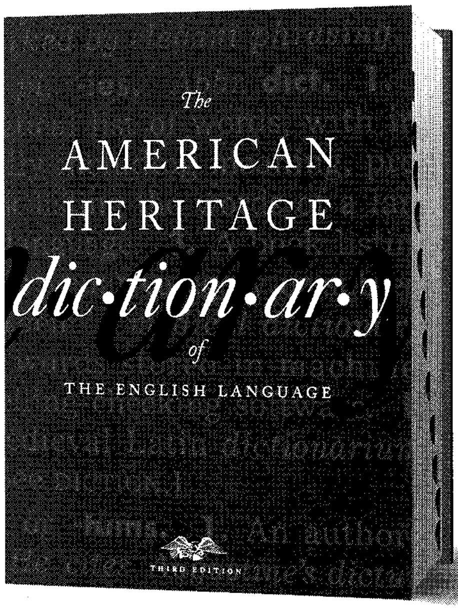

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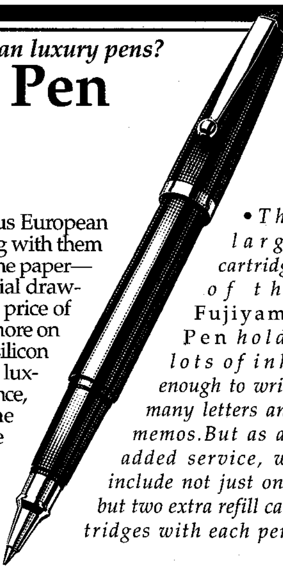

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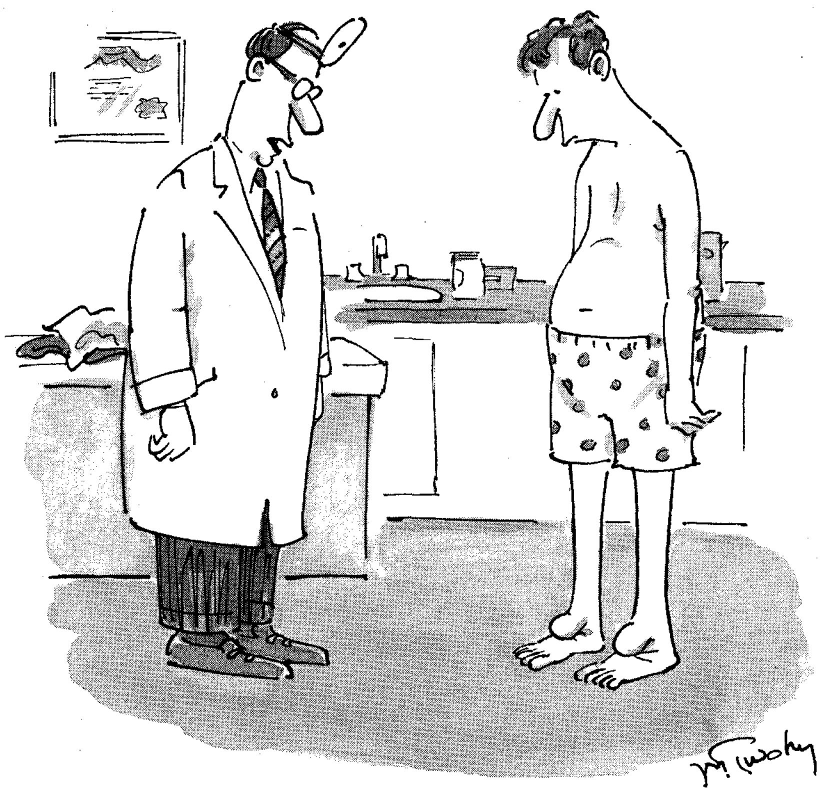


"The knees are the first thing to go."

• •

cial said. "How can we stop payments to an orphan, even when we know, in our gut, that that orphan may one day strap himself to a suicide bomb?"

He told me that over the past year Hamas had begun moving many of its financial operations out of the United States and into the Middle East, particularly to Amman but also to Damascus, where the hard-line factions of its leadership are based. The hard-liners are now engaged in a bitter dispute with their counterparts in Gaza and the West Bank over tactics, talks with the Palestinian Authority, and the feasibility of terrorist attacks. At the time of his arrest, Abu Marzook was attempting to convince the hard-liners that terrorist attacks had become increasingly counterproductive.

"Who are the main financial backers of Hamas?" I asked.

"Between forty and fifty per cent of its money comes from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, and probably ten per cent from Iran," the official replied. "But the Iranian support is key—it's official, it's continuing aid, and it includes training in South Lebanese camps. And Iran's sole reason for supporting Hamas—it's an uneasy relationship—is to thwart the Middle East peace process. The four suicide bombs this spring were not just operations. They were meant to change the political situation inside Israel, and"—with Netanyahu's electoral victory—"they did precisely that."

On August 1, 1993—six months after Mohammed Salah's arrest and four months after Hamas was labelled a "terrorist organization" by the State Department, partly as a consequence—Mousa Abu Marzook left the United States and reëstablished Hamas's Political Bureau in Amman, in the headquarters of Jordan's influential Muslim Brotherhood. He returned to the United States three or four times a year to renew his green card, and to continue his talks with United States government officials in Washington.

On July 1, 1995, two days after a meeting between King Hussein and Prime Minister Rabin, the Jordanian Prime Minister called Abu Marzook into his office and explained that, as a result of pressure from Israel, the Jordanian government had to ask him to leave.

"I remember it clearly, as if it were yesterday," Abu Marzook's father, Mohammed, told me. "I was there. I believe in God, and what I say is true. My boy was startled, and didn't know what to do, where to go. So he visited the American Embassy in Amman, and he explained that he had two choices, two places where he had the status of a permanent resident: Abu Dhabi and the United States. Where does he go? The Embassy knew my son very well, and they knew his political status in Hamas. And they told him that he would face no problems if he returned home."

Twenty-two days later, Mousa Abu Marzook kissed his father goodbye, boarded a plane, and was arrested at J.F.K.

I met Mousa Abu Marzook in mid-July, in the maximum-security ward of the Metropolitan Correctional Center, in lower Manhattan. All that I had heard about him had seemed so contradictory that I was not at all certain whether he would be a shy, cautious scholar or a dynamic political leader. He proved to be both, gliding effortlessly from one role to another. Perhaps what startled me most was his physical appearance. He seemed smaller than his five-foot-nine-inch frame, and he had recently lost thirty pounds. His most prominent feature was his eyes, which were large and brown, and there was a melancholy about him, at least initially, that I hadn't expected. He was dressed in a bright-orange prison jumpsuit, and as he walked toward me he held his hands in front of him, wrist upon wrist, as though he were still wearing the handcuffs that had just been removed.

He greeted me warmly, if a bit shyly, and after an exchange of amenities I asked him if he had been surprised by his arrest at J.F.K.

"Surprise is rather an understatement," he replied. "I was totally unprepared, because I had had every assurance that I would face no problems here. I'd been coming and going between here and Jordan for nearly three years. I never left the United States forever, and in May of last year I renewed my reëntry papers from Amman: I sent all my documents to the I.N.S. for both myself and my kids. And the I.N.S. returned them, with all the appropriate signatures and stamps."

"When were you placed on the terrorist watch list?" I asked.

"Would you believe it? My lawyers *still* can't find out? It must have been in April of 1995, because I had been here for three months—until February, when I returned to Amman."

When I asked Abu Marzook to tell me about the secret talks between Hamas and the United States government, for the only time during my hour-long meeting with him he was evasive, contradicting himself and refusing to be drawn out. It was clear that the talks were something that he didn't want to discuss.

His reticence was perhaps explained partly by the fact that for some months United States and Israeli officials have quietly been attempting to find a face-saving formula that would enable him to be freed. His extradition increasingly seemed to be of merit to no one: the Israelis were concerned about the political cost of an impassioned trial, and the United States was well aware of the turmoil it could cause in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where clerics are already threatening, in Friday prayers, that if Abu Marzook is extradited a new intifada could begin. "This is a political dynamic, not a simple extradition case," I was told by a senior United States official. "And, in the end, everyone wants Abu Marzook where he belongs—out there negotiating and trying to bring Hamas into the fold."

When I was in Gaza, Hamas had issued a largely ignored communiqué outlining its terms for a temporary ceasefire with Israel: the opening of the West Bank and Gaza Strip; an end to arresting its rank and file; and the release of all prisoners, including Sheikh Yassin. I now asked Abu Marzook if the communiqué was genuine.

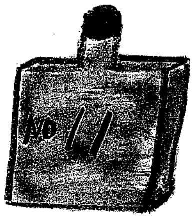
"Yes," he replied simply. "These were my suggestions. I relayed them from here."

"Does that mean that Hamas is ready to enter into negotiations with the Israeli government?"

"Look. That statement doesn't talk about negotiations. It has one clear message: the violence has got to stop. And it's got to stop from all sides, not just from ours—from the Israelis and from the Palestinian Authority. Violence solves nothing in the end. We all have to find common ground. And the key issue is: Do we, as Palestinians, have the right to live in the area in peace and security? Netanyahu talks endlessly of Israel's need for security, but what about ours? Does this peace accord even speak of security for the Palestinians? Does it give us the right to move freely throughout Gaza and the West Bank? To elect our leaders freely? To enter the economic market freely? To develop relations with other countries freely? Absolutely not. Under the terms of this accord, we can't even move between the West Bank and Gaza without permission from the Israeli authorities. If Arafat wants to take a helicopter from one city to another, he's got to get permission from Israel in advance. And you now ask me if we're willing to negotiate under *this* accord. No. We have opposed it from the beginning. It gives nothing to us."

Since the question of the Political Bureau's accountability for terrorist acts was central to Abu Marzook's extradition case, I asked him how much control the political wing has over the Izz el-Din Qassem Brigades.

"None," he answered, not surprisingly, then added that, while the political wing wanted an end to violence, it had limited authority over dozens of what are essentially independent military cells in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "You've got to understand the structure of Hamas," he said. "We work both above and below ground, and have four very distinct wings: political, humanitarian, educational, and military. Each of these groups has its own autonomy. By their very nature, the Izz el-Din Qassem Brigades, as an underground military arm, have no centralization or hierarchy. And the Israelis are well aware of this. Just last December, when the political wing of Hamas held negotiations in Cairo with the Palestinian Authority, the Israelis themselves permitted half of Hamas's negotiating team to leave East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank to join the others in Cairo. Would they have permitted this if they thought that these political leaders were directing others to set off a bomb?"



I had learned earlier that Abu Marzook had not been replaced as the head of the Political Bureau. He thus remains an important policymaker, even in jail. And since, even in the worst of times, the dialogue between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority has never stopped, I asked him what Hamas's conditions were for joining the Palestinian Authority.

"Let me make it very clear that the conflict between the Palestinian people has got to stop. I know that Arafat is under tremendous pressure from the Israelis and the Americans to crack down on Hamas. But what has he accomplished by putting a thousand people in jail? By closing our mosques? In the end, I can assure you that this is going to backfire. If you look at the history of Hamas, every time we are under pressure we have come out on top. Look what happened when the Israelis deported four hundred and sixteen people, whom they described as leaders of Hamas, to the south of Lebanon in December of 1992. There were another four hundred and sixteen who filled their positions immediately—that means eight hundred and thirty-two leaders in Gaza and the West Bank. The expulsions were Rabin's biggest mistake, and he acknowledged it. You've seen what this present crackdown has done to people in Gaza and the West Bank. They've become terrified. Even when they're interviewed by the New York *Times*, they're afraid to use their full names. If you read history, you know that violence breeds violence: imposing your will through muscle, through force, is no solution. You've got to compromise; you've got to understand each other. If you use muscle alone, perhaps you're a temporary winner, but in the long run you're a loser. And Arafat has got to understand that."

A prison guard pounded on the metal door of the room where we were sitting and shouted, "Five minutes more!"

After he had gone, Abu Marzook said, "Everyone in the press compares me to Gerry Adams, but he goes to the White House and I go to jail. Perhaps for me the single greatest paradox of my imprisonment is: If you want to solve a problem, you don't arrest one of the key people involved in the talks. And you don't arrest someone simply because of his political views. Yes, I oppose the present Palestinian-Israeli accord, and I sit here in jail, reading the newspapers, and every day Benjamin Netanyahu is saying precisely the same thing I've said—that the present agreement is unworkable. And there's got to be an irony in that." ♦

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

A DOLL'S HOUSE

Not so long ago, the G.O.P. still had room for suffragettes.

BY SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

FOR women of a certain kind, a certain time, and a certain social universe, Republicanism was much more than an electoral choice. It was a creed—the identity politics of the Anglo-Saxon ascendancy. One could no more cease to be a Republican than one could cease to be one's mother's daughter; one could no more turn oneself into a Democrat than one could wake up one day and decide to become an Irish Catholic.

As an organism, the Grand Old Party could not function without these women. They were the volunteers who made the machinery turn, and they gave the Party the temper of something other than a partisan operation. They were also the women—especially across the northern tier of states from coast to coast—who ran the local charities and the chapters of the League of Women Voters, Planned Parenthood, and the Audubon Society. Their social authority was unassailable. The Republican claim to stand for good government, decency, and enlightened moderation rested strongly on the presence of these civic-minded individuals—women like Susan McLane, of New Hampshire, whose identity as a Republican was indissoluble from her identity as a New England Yankee.

"We were the soul of the Republican Party," McLane said to me recently. "It never occurred to us not to be Republicans." At Mount Holyoke College, in 1947, she was the president of her freshman class and a champion skier. She left school after a year and married the grandson of a former governor of New Hampshire. The couple settled in Concord, the state capital, and there her husband was elected mayor. While rearing five children, she became the president of the local chapter of the League of Women Voters and of the state's Council on World Affairs. She was elected to the state legislature in 1968, and, ten years later, to the state senate. In both chambers, she was the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

Because New Hampshire is the site of the first Presidential primary, every four years local officials become power brokers for aspiring candidates. As the most prominent female Republican politician in the state, Susan McLane was courted avidly. In 1976, she was the chairman of the Merrimack County Committee for Ford for President. In the next Presidential-election cycle, she held the first party for George Bush in the state, and the Bushes stayed at the McLane house. Eight years later, however, McLane had become disillusioned with Bush, who, having served two terms as Ronald Reagan's Vice-President, had adopted many of Reagan's most conservative positions, including his stand against abortion. She was open to overtures from other candidates.

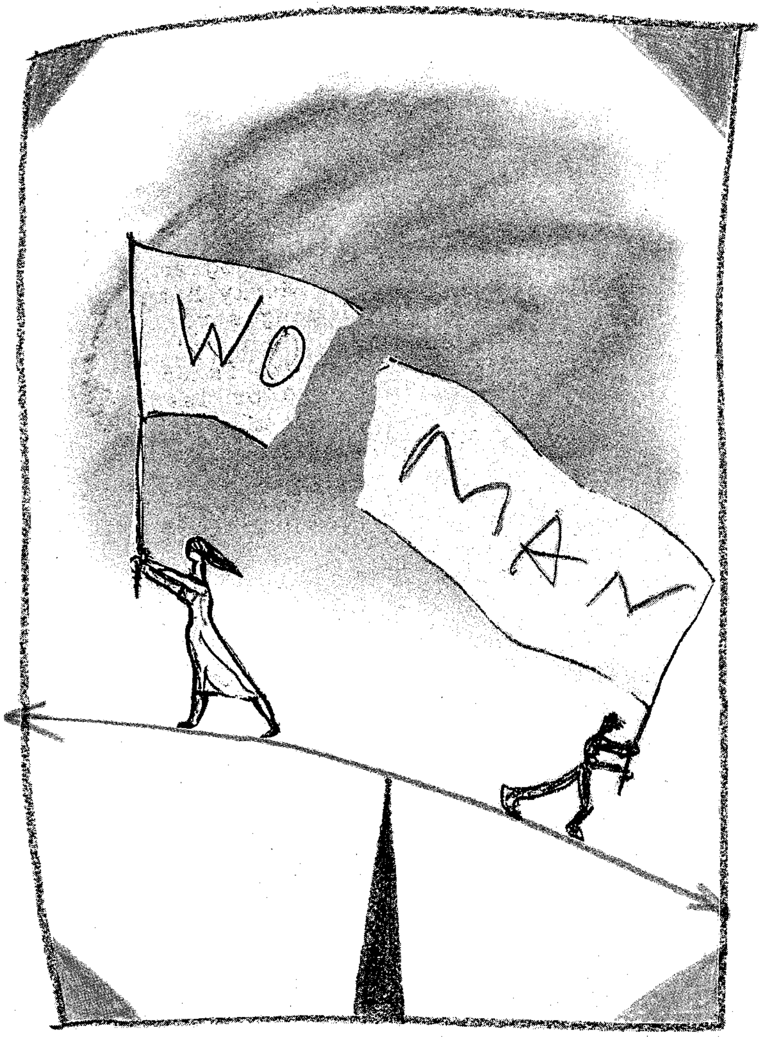
The Dole campaign in 1988 was eager for State Senator McLane's endorsement, and to her it sent its highest emissary—Elizabeth Dole. One of Dole's tasks was to assure moderate Republican women that the man she knew intimately was not the same as the harsh-sounding candidate, that his fervent anti-abortion position was not representative of the true Dole, even though he had run on that position during his 1974 reëlection race, when he attacked his challenger, an obstetrician, for having performed abortions. "I told Liddy Dole that the abortion issue was most important," McLane recalled. "She said, 'He has to be that way, because he's from Kansas, but he's not going to do anything about it.' " At heart, Elizabeth Dole argued, Bob Dole was a moderate, too. "That's when I supported Dole," McLane said.

In this year's New Hampshire primary, McLane did not support Dole—or any other Republican. Nor is she a delegate to the Republican National Convention, in San Diego. "The Republican Party has become a different animal," she said. "The good Republican women have been smoked out." In February, McLane announced that she would vote for Bill Clinton. "I told the Clinton White House

I'd be happy to do anything. I'm an old-line Republican who's had enough."

During our conversation, McLane described her experiences as "typical," and, plainly, the managers of the Dole campaign are worried about the defection of women like her. In mid-July, they issued a fiat within the campaign that the most important target audience for the Convention would be women voters. "Female friendly" was the phrase they used among themselves to discuss the tone that they want the Convention to project. The angry white males of two years ago are a memory. Alienated professional and working women have become for the Republicans in the nineteen-nineties what discontented blue-collar men were for the Democrats in the eighties.

Although the "gender gap" has been discussed this year, and in years past, with numbing repetition, it appears to have become so wide as to be central to Presidential politics. According to a recent NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll, women voters preferred Clinton to Dole by a twenty-three-per-cent margin; the President's lead among men was only nine per cent. This sweeping movement of women away from the Republicans has not been some mysterious migration of peoples amid swirling sandstorms. Rather, the rise of conservatism within the Republican Party has coincided with the rise of the women's movement, and the result is that a bitter intra-Party struggle has been going on for more than two decades. Until very recently, many moderate G.O.P. women could not really accept the idea that their status had been altered to their disadvantage. The language they used in discussing their political experiences bore an uncanny resemblance to descriptions of the state of mind leading to divorce. For the most part, it has taken these women years to reach the point of wrenching themselves away from a suffocating entanglement. Only now are they acting like a collective Nora in the final act of "A Doll's House"—headed for the door.



Women and the Republicans: the split was a long time coming.

THE Republican Party has historically had a solid record on women's rights. The women's-suffrage amendment was supported by the Party and was finally approved by a Republican Congress, and the G.O.P. endorsed a constitutional equal-rights amendment as a platform plank at its 1940 Convention—four years ahead of the Democrats.

The struggle for women's access to legal abortion had its origin in the women's-suffrage movement. After the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified, in 1920, the movement for birth control gained impetus, and some activists behind it shifted their focus. One of the most prominent of these activists was Katharine Houghton Hepburn, who had been the president of the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association and a member of the National Woman's Party. She was a doctor's wife and the mother of the actress (who even today signs fund-raising appeals for Planned Parenthood). She helped found the Connecticut Birth Control League, which thereupon set up clinics to grant women access to contraceptives and was then prosecuted for violating a state law against the use of birth control. The organization was reconstituted as the Planned Parenthood League of Connecticut, and in 1965 it won a United States Supreme Court ruling that recognized a fundamental right to privacy. As a direct result of this decision, a number of cases—including Roe v. Wade, in Texas—were filed seeking to legalize abortion.

The G.O.P. remained true to its traditions in the early nineteen-seventies. The Equal Rights Amendment, with broad Republican support, passed the House in 1971 and the Senate in 1972, and was sent to the states for ratification. In January of 1973, Bob Dole, in one of his last acts as chairman of the Republican National Committee, approved an effort by the states to back the E.R.A.

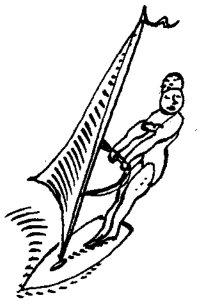
At the time, Mary Dent Crisp was the National Committeewoman from Arizona. She had been drawn into politics by Barry Goldwater. "I was strictly a Party person," she told me. A month after she received her orders from the Party, she testified in favor of the E.R.A. before a joint senate-house committee of the Arizona legislature. She expected little trouble and was shocked when "I was shot down by my own legislators," she recalled recently. Phyllis Schlafly testified against the E.R.A.: "That was the first time I saw her in the flesh. She had her plastic grin, led her troops like Miss Demure, but as soon as she opened her mouth her words were forceful. For the first time, I thought, This is a serious, serious issue."

Schlafly was the author of "A Choice Not an Echo," a widely distributed pro-Goldwater paperback of 1964. A lawyer and a Catholic, she believed that the

EUGÈNE MIHAESCO

"would take away the marvelous gal rights of a woman to be a full-time wife and mother in the house supported by her husband." Prefiguring the change within the conservative movement, Schlafly was remaking herself into a new political type—the anti-feminist crusader. In September of 1972, she convened a group that she called Stop E.R.A., and it was eventually subsumed by the Eagle Forum, which advertised itself as "An Alternative to Women's Lib."

"I put together the organization that beat the E.R.A.," Schlafly told me recently. "It was a ten-year battle. Everyone was against us—the President, the governors, the political parties, Betty Ford. It had two major effects. We invented the pro-family movement. And the other thing we did for the movement is that we taught them we could win. After the Goldwater defeat, conservatives didn't believe we could win. The attitude was that we blew it, the best we could do was Richard Nixon. Other good things wouldn't have happened without beating it, like the conservative dominance within the Republican Party."



Mary Dent Crisp, meanwhile, remained active in the Party. She was the secretary of the 1976 Convention and called the roll of states during balloting for the Presidential nomination. "I was looked upon as someone who would play the game," she told me. By then, the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision, in 1973, had galvanized the anti-abortion movement, and it melded with the anti-E.R.A. movement into a broader anti-feminist offensive. Republican strategists seized on this as a new opportunity to pry Northern Catholic voters and Southern voters away from the Democrats and to forge a so-called Republican New Majority. At the 1976 Convention, moderate women received a jolt: a plank advocating a constitutional amendment banning abortion—sponsored by Senator Bob Dole and supported by conservative followers of President Gerald Ford and those of his challenger, Ronald Reagan—was placed in the platform.

After the Republican ticket of Ford and Dole was defeated, Crisp was named the co-chairman of the R.N.C. In that position, she established a women's-outreach program and conducted women's conferences around the country. When the question of extending the time for the E.R.A. to win approval by the states was brought up, she said, she had to drag her chairman "kicking and screaming" to agree.

In the 1980 Republican primaries, the moderates mostly backed Bush. "I had a great deal of respect for him," Crisp said. "I felt he was with us on the women's issues. He was solidly behind the E.R.A. All the things you've heard about George Bush were true—the Planned Parenthood support." Given her position, Crisp could not endorse anybody, but, after Reagan was certain of the nomination, she told a reporter that she had a good opinion of another moderate, Representative John Anderson, of Illinois, who had just defected from the G.O.P. to run an independent Presidential campaign. The pressure from the right to remove her became intense. "It was grim," she said. "The die was cast. I was on the blacklist."

She hung on for a while as the R.N.C. co-chairman, but, with the Reagan forces now in charge, her name was removed from the Convention program, and the Party would not book a hotel room for her. "They did everything to humiliate me they possibly could," Crisp told me. "I was angry and very sad. I felt the way I did when I got my divorce."

The platform committee voted not to endorse the E.R.A.—reversing forty years of policy—and it supported a constitutional amendment that would ban abortion. Crisp was forced to resign from the R.N.C. "Although our party has presented the outward appearance of vibrant health, I'm afraid we are suffering from serious internal sickness," Crisp said in her farewell.

DESPITE all this, there remained a group of moderate Republican women who believed that they could keep the marriage going—that they could make the Party change. Among them were women like Mary Louise Smith, who succeeded George Bush as the R.N.C. chairman in the mid-seventies and then, during the 1980 campaign, headed the Reagan-Bush Women's Policy Board. After Reagan won, she was appointed to the United States Civil Rights Commission, but the commission asserted its independence and issued a report critical of the Reagan Administration for reversing the "trend of ever more women and minorities appointed to high-level positions by succeeding presidents." Smith and Jill Ruckelshaus, another moderate Republican, were "targeted," Smith told me. Neither woman was reappointed to the commission. "They got rid of us," Smith said.

Through all this, there was always the belief that Republicans would not have to pay a price for their positions on the women's issue. "The analysis is the center will hold, the moderates will stick," said Tanya Melich, a G.O.P. moderate who supported Bush until the 1992 Convention, in Houston, turned into a showcase of the culture wars, and who later wrote "The Republican War Against Women." She went on, "If someone says that the Party is against the interests of women, they'll say we have such impressive women working in the Party, like Elizabeth Dole in the Cabinet." Nonetheless, a new electoral phenomenon—what became known as the gender gap—was gaining visibility on the political map. At first, the gap appeared to be an enormous opportunity for the Democrats. Walter Mondale, the Democratic candidate in 1984, placed his chips on it by choosing Representative Geraldine Ferraro, of New York, as his running mate. But the gender gap then narrowed. It did so again in 1988, when George Bush defeated Michael S. Dukakis.

The moderate women's hopes for support from Bush were soon dashed. In his first year in office, his Solicitor General, Kenneth Starr, appeared before the Supreme Court as an amicus curiae in Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, a case involving a Missouri law that barred the use of public facilities for abortion services and required tests for fetal viability. In his brief, on behalf of the law, Starr argued in favor of overturning Roe. Almost immediately after the Webster decision was handed down, in July of 1989, moderates formed the Republican Coalition for Choice, and Mary Dent Crisp became its chairman. But they were spurned by the Party even more flagrantly than before. At the 1992 Convention, the moderates were given rooms in a motel two hours away from the Convention center, and they were not allowed to display their literature, although religious-right groups were given ample space.

Four years later, as Dole moved toward the nomination, the religious right accelerated its march to take over the Republican Party at the state level. This became particularly clear in June, during the Texas Republican Convention. Senator Kay Bailey

Hutchison, a Party regular with an American Conservative Union lifetime rating of ninety-two per cent, had been slated as a Dole delegate to the National Convention, but the religious right held her accreditation in abeyance because she is reservedly pro-choice. Hutchison's safe passage was ultimately secured, but several other Dole delegates were removed from the slate.

Dolly Madison McKenna, a moderate who ran unsuccessfully for state Party chairman two years ago, attended the Texas Convention and was not shocked. "They're not interested in moderate women. They're not interested in moderate anybody," she told me. McKenna is a businesswoman who in 1994 ran for the Republican nomination for Congress in her district and faced an assault from right-to-life groups supporting her opponent and charging her with being a "baby killer." She lost the primary and, she says, knew that she would lose the race for state Party chairman. But she got the chance to make a statement to the whole Party, a remark that became notorious: "The Republican Party is not a church."

As recently as this past June, Dole was confident that he could resolve the controversy over abortion in the G.O.P. platform and thus the women's issue. "Piece of cake," he proclaimed. Ever the Senate leader putting together a makeshift coalition on the bill at hand, Dole tried to pass out a mollifying crumb here and there, and he now appears exasperated that he was unable to push the tormenting issue aside. Nothing has seemed to work—not even choosing Representative Susan Molinari, of New York, who is a member of Speaker Newt Gingrich's leadership circle, and is also pro-choice, as the Convention's keynote speaker.

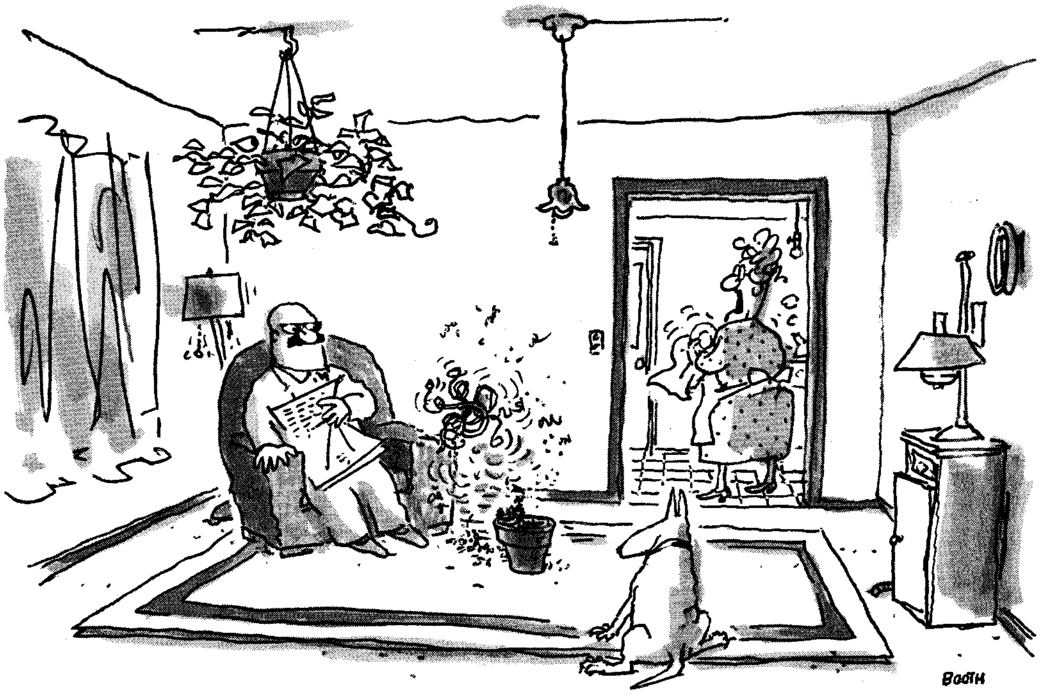
Before Dole made his decision in June on how he wanted to word the abortion plank of the platform, he privately promised Senator Olympia Snowe, the moderate Republican from Maine, that he would consult her on the matter and inform her of its final wording. But when Dole said that a "declaration of tolerance" could reside in the preamble, and not in the abortion plank itself, as he had earlier indicated, Snowe learned about his decision from news reports. "It came as a surprise, a major disappointment," Snowe told me recently. "We were told we would be involved. Absolutely. I expressed my disappointment to him." For moderate Republicans like Snowe, it had been second nature to think of themselves as the upholders of the mainstream; it was a shock to realize they had become a mere faction—and, worse, outcasts. "From our traditional roots, the Party is becoming unrecognizable," Snowe said. She used the word "unrecognizable" several times in our interview. "These groups on the right are driving the political agenda of the Republican Party. It's a question whether Senator Dole can divorce himself from their demands. Can we sustain ourselves as a majority party in Congress moving in that direction? I would say not."

Last week, under pressure from the religious right, the tolerance statement was altered once more—this time to remove the words "personal conscience," "abortion," and "capital punishment." For moderate women, the modified language was yet another insult. "They just disinvited us again," Ann Stone, the head of Republicans for Choice, told the Washington *Post*. To avoid a bitter fight on the Convention floor, Party leaders agreed that minority views on abortion and other issues could be printed in an addendum to the platform.

"Why are they stirring up all this trouble?" Phyllis Schlafly said to me about the moderate women. "You've got a certain type of country-club Republicans who are used to running their little party in their own way. They do feel displaced by these people they don't know. They don't have the votes. Their brand doesn't sell." Evoking Barry Goldwater's famous line in his 1964 acceptance speech ("Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice . . . moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue"), Schlafly dismissed Dole's effort at a tolerance statement in the platform. "Tolerance is not always a virtue," she said.

"It's an institutional problem," Linda DiVall, a Republican pollster who was brought into the Dole campaign in June as a senior adviser, told me. "We need aggressive steps to deal with it short term, in this election, and then long-term steps." But Dole's tactics are calculated to alleviate momentarily a long battle about the role of women—a battle in which the Republican Party has gradually but decisively altered its position. Dole has now been snared by his party's history, and by his own.

To Mary Dent Crisp, women like Elizabeth Dole and Susan Molinari appear to have chosen to remain in a doll's house. "The actions Dole is taking to rectify the problem will only aggravate it," the former co-chairwoman of the Republican National Committee said. "There's a certain sadness for someone like me. I really did believe in the Party." ♦



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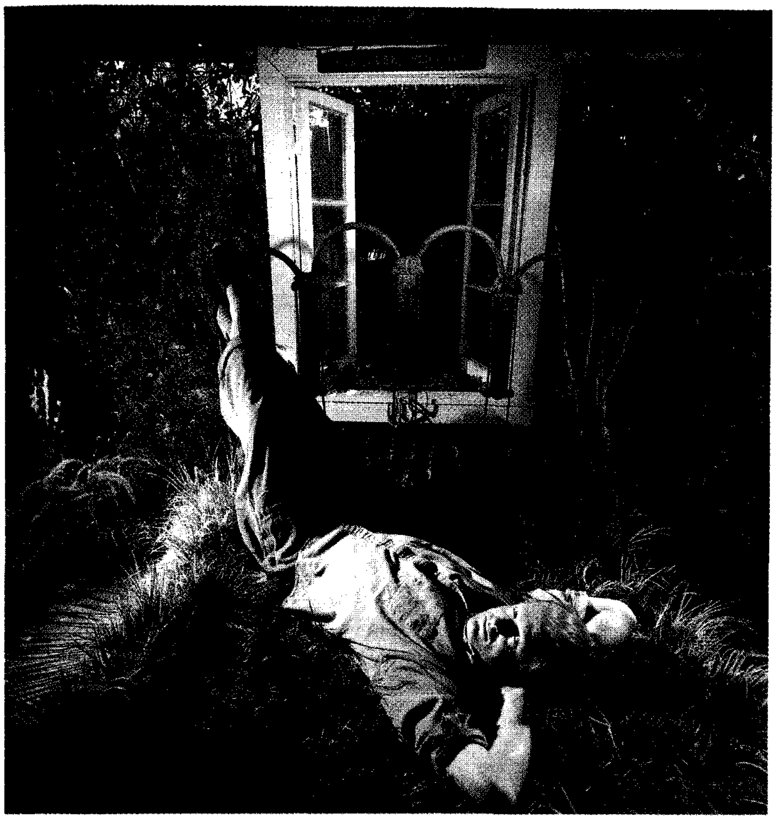
THE GRASSMAN

Can John Greenlee do away with the lawn?

BY WADE GRAHAM

IT would be hard to find a more problematic index of what being American means than our feelings about lawns. Lawns cover some fifty thousand square miles of the surface of the United States—an area roughly equal to Pennsylvania, and larger than that occupied by any agricultural crop. Spread thick like margarine over the landscape from sea to shining sea, the lawn—more than cows, corn, or blue hydrangeas—is the key ingredient in the Stepford-like biological monotony that defines suburban America. Ideally, it looks the same in Palm Springs and Bangor: soothing, orderly, reliable, and, above all, green.

Each year, to maintain this American quilt, we spend thirty billion dollars, an investment whose complexity is in inverse proportion to the monoculture it sustains. The lawn industry is only tangentially about grass. At base it is a stunningly elaborate enabler of petrochemical addiction. Most lawn grasses like to get a foot or two tall, flower, turn brown, and then either die or lie dormant at the end of each season. To keep that from happening requires assiduous abuse. We provoke the grass to grow, which happens to make it susceptible to invasion and disease, then we cut it. Then we start again. Consider the network of petrochemical inputs we use to keep the national sward green: the gasoline-fuelled tractors and bulldozers that first scrape the topsoil off the home site; the genetically engineered seeds and sods; the fertilizers; the pesticides that keep it free of insect life; the herbicides that keep it free of "bad" plants, like dandelions and clover; the mercury-based fungicides that kill the microbes and the earthworms and keep the dirt under the grass from becoming soil; the mower, the blower, the edger, and the trucks that haul the crews and



Greenlee in Pomona: hunting for the grail of grasses.

DUDLEY REED

the clippings to the landfill; the power plants that pump the water through the deserts to the sprinklers. In the East, an estimated thirty per cent of municipal water ends up on the lawn; in the West, about sixty per cent. In 1990, we poured an estimated seventy million pounds of -cides (not including fertilizers) on our lawns. Most end up in the water supply.

By one measure, the lawn is a triumph of the diversified American economy, and we should therefore be proud of it, even if the regime of lawn culture is a bit sadistic. Fertilize, sterilize, mow—forever. Or, as John Greenlee, a leading critic of lawn culture and a spokesman for what has come to be known as the natural-gardening movement, described it to me, "Jack it, gack it, and whack it." This was the approach dinned into him when he was a horticulture student in the mid-seventies at the California State Polytechnic University, in Pomona.

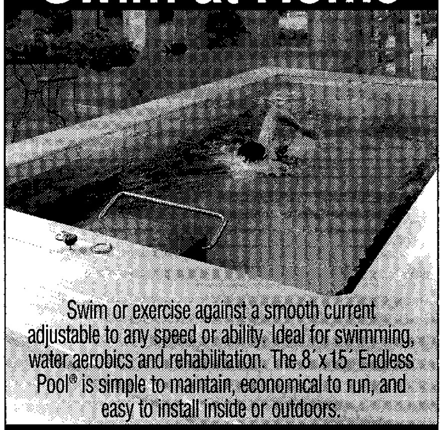
"When I was in school, it was definitely Better Living Through Chemistry," he told me early this summer as we drove through the fields around Oxnard, California, one of the richest vegetable and lawn-sod farming regions in the country. In the billiard-table-flat sod fields zipping by the window, Rain Birds shot tracer-like spokes of water into the night. Overhead, a gray plume from a Procter & Gamble factory twisted, glowing with the lights of the freshly minted housing tracts that nibbled at the margins of the fields like misshapen teeth. "My instructors at Cal Poly taught us to use every chemical known to man—methyl bromide; Treflan; Surflan; 2, 4-D; 2, 4, 5-T—by the ton," Greenlee recalled. "One of our responsibilities in the greenhouses was spraying soil pesticides: suited up head to toe in rubber with a hose, like a fireman, you just blasted away at everything in sight."

AMERICA has not always been a lawn. Walt Whitman called it "the grass-fields of the world!" in "Leaves of Grass." The young nation's newly acquired continent was covered in the stuff, and Whitman was quick to see its larger significance: the limitless expanses of waving prairie defiantly promised freedom from European strictures and small-mindedness. Grass was rampant, pungent, musical; it was an untamed, unrestrained, self-renewing *force*. "The smallest sprout shows there is really no death," Whitman wrote. And one thing is sure: his leaves of grass were not hacked off at the base; they were not mowed.

But, while Whitman sang, others labored, mapping the suburbia that would fill up the spaces left by the slaughtered buffalo and the plowed plains. In 1830, the first practical lawnmower was patented, and it was quickly put to use to shape grass into a new emblem of civic virtue. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Frederick Law Olmsted and his architect Calvert Vaux got rich taking the artificial, labor-intensive greenswards of English estates and bringing them to the masses, making them the central conceit of their planned suburbs and Gothic-theme city parks. Frank J. Scott, in his influential 1870 book "The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds," prescribed a "smooth, closely-shaven" lawn as "by far the most essential element of beauty on the grounds of a suburban house." In defiance of the English custom of walling or hedging home gardens, Scott ordained that the lawn serve as a tablecloth on which to present an unobstructed view of one's house to passersby—a guarantee of democratic candor and transparency. "It is unchristian," he wrote, "to hedge from the sight of others the beauties of nature which it has been our good fortune to create or secure." Nature? Scott's formula consummated the perfect Puritan repression of the wild landscape: no privacy, no sex.

WHEN John Greenlee finished his academic horticultural studies, in 1978, he started a landscaping-and-lawn-care business. At first, he stuck with the conventional routine—what he now calls "Mow, blow, and go"—and pumped on the chemicals, just as he'd been taught. Before long, he got bored with trying to achieve the greenest, most velvety tablecloths in the neighborhood. His epiphany came one summer evening in 1984 at a nursery in Baltimore owned by Kurt Bluemel, a German who specialized in bringing garden grasses, many developed in Germany, to this country. Bluemel was growing *ornamental* grasses: gigantic, multicolored creatures that could go toe to toe in the perennial border with the gaudiest rose or peony. And they were environmentally friendly, needing fewer chemical inputs and sustaining far more biodiversity than most ornamental plants.

"It just hit me," Greenlee recalls. "I got it. I understood. I saw the flowerheads, saw the plant as a whole and not just as Astroturf. It was an incredible cultural leap." Forget about chemically addicted



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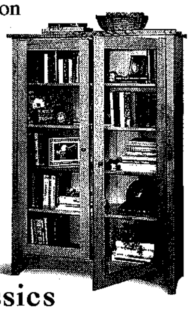

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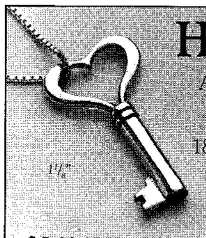

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lawns and flower borders, he decided; we can make gardens with the grasses—or, better yet, we can make flowering meadows instead of gardens. Greenlee dropped everything to begin growing ornamental grasses commercially at his home in Pomona. He took to the lecture circuit, preaching the new grass gospel to garden clubs and anyone else who would listen. In 1992, he published "The Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses," and in horticultural circles he became known as "the Grassman."

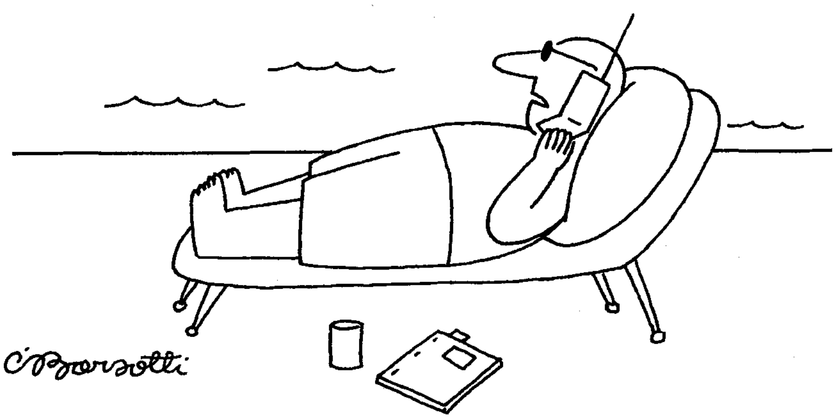
During these years, in Washington, D.C., a dynamic pair of landscape architects who had trained in Germany and Holland, Wolfgang Oehme and James van Sweden, were causing a stir with untraditional gardens that featured tall flowering grasses. Even more unthinkable, they insisted that these should be left standing, skeletons dusted with snow, throughout the winter months. Oehme and van Sweden's naturalistic style was heralded as "the New American Garden," and their grasses could soon be seen waving boldly in the nation's capital along Pennsylvania Avenue, and in lower Manhattan at Battery Park City.

A revolution was in the making, and nonprofessional gardeners, too, began to raise their voices. Michael Pollan, in his 1991 book, "Second Nature," wrote, "The democratic system can cope with the non-voter far more easily than the democratic landscape can cope with the non-mower. A single unmowed lawn ruins the whole effect, announcing to the world that all is not well here in utopia."

The message of the anti-lawn movement was simple: get rid of the damn thing (preferably with Roundup, the first good chemical defoliant, because, after it kills everything it touches, it conveniently biodegrades) and plant something else. Or just let it all revert to wilderness. Some landscape designers followed this prescription. "Wild" gardens were planted in which no straight lines were tolerated. Instant-prairie seed mixes were spread in the back yard. Martha Stewart—naturally—got into it. In her 1995 cookbook, she instructed us to bake our hams over a bed of grass "cut . . . very early in the morning while the dew is still evident." Inevitably, the lawn patrol fought back. Non-mowers were taken to court by indignant neighbors under local ordinances that declared grass exceeding twelve inches to be a "menace to public health."

MEANWHILE, John Greenlee has moved on. Three years ago, he addressed a lawn-industry convention in Las Vegas, during which he bluntly disparaged the previous speaker, a dinosaur-era Turf Man. When Greenlee stepped down, he was confronted by his nemesis, who turned out to be the vice-president of a major lawnmower manufacturer. Spittle flying, the vice-president demanded, "What about the *snakes*?" The Grassman's defiant reply was "Exactly! What *about* the snakes? Where have all the toads gone? And the songbirds? We need snakes—snakes are nature. But everything is dead, for Christ's sake. You've killed it!"

Afterward, sitting at a table ready to sign copies of his book, Greenlee was a pariah: no one would come near him. He began to wonder if maybe the guy had a point about the snakes. There were a few problems with the meadow thing: Sure, you didn't have to mow it, but there *was* nastiness lurking in all that tall grass—if not snakes, then deer ticks. And, as a Westerner, Greenlee had to admit to the danger of fire. Many grasses, especially when dormant and dry, are highly flammable. Fire is part of their ecology. Grasslands are firelands, holding competing woody plants at bay.



"Yeah, he's in rehab, but for the right role I can spring him."

Eventually, it came to Greenlee: Americans have to have some sort of lawn. How, in tinder-dry August, could you grill hot dogs on the Weber in your meadow without incinerating the house? Perhaps, he reflected, the natural-gardening movement had become too absolutist. There had to be a third way: a way to reinvent the lawn, to bring it back *into* nature. The botanist in him asked, If grasses can be big and floriferous, why can't they also be the opposite: low, self-effacing, and well-behaved? He knew that grasses in nature were extraordinarily tough, thriving in some of the harshest environments imaginable. Why were our lawn grasses—strains selected as the result of hundreds of millions of dollars in research—so perpetually thirsty, hungry, and disease-prone? Then it came to him: Our pampered lawns are not plants, they're *animals.* The distinction was crucial. Animals don't generate their own food, but plants do. Plants combine carbon dioxide, water, and sunlight to make a simple sugar. Photosynthesis. Either you can do it or you can't. If you can, you're a plant. If you can't, you're an animal.

Somewhere out there in nature, he reasoned, there had to be a grass that wasn't an animal, a grass that would be naturally low-growing, drought-tolerant, evergreen, and trampleable: a *natural* lawn grass.

ALL this was explained to me while I was driving with Greenlee through the golden, oak-dotted hills of central California, in the early morning, looking for what seemed to me a nearly vanished species. When America ground its way westward, Greenlee pointed out, we devastated an enormously rich tapestry of grass ecologies, particularly since grasses tended to dominate the most attractive land: flat, fertile floodplains. We burned them off, plowed them under, skinned them with grazing animals, and spread aggressive, imported fodder grasses in the new pastures—species that had evolved for centuries in Europe with intense grazing, and consequently were able to overwhelm American species unused to such stress. Our native grasses, en masse, have largely disappeared.

Pointing at a parched hillside deeply striated with cattle trails, Greenlee said, "It's all gone. It's hammered." The severely munched tufts of grass clinging to the slope, he assured me, were "invasion species." Only a narrow strip of grass between the fence and the road—ungrazed—harbored any natives: tiny remnant patches, which he identified in Latin as we sped by. "There's *Elymus*, there's *Stipa*. That little piece is about the most you can expect to find." It all looked exactly alike to me: blond, dead grass, waving in the breeze. "It's the same all across the country," he continued. "Either overgrazed or plowed. If it was flat, it was plowed. If it was plowed, it's gone." Worst of all, he said, was the loss of the riparian areas, because in flood-prone, meandering rivers and streams were a host of interesting grasses. These included—most important—sedges (genus *Carex*), a group of hundreds of mostly unassuming, short, conventionally ugly little things, chaotically niche-adapted but, more than most other groups of grasses, capable of standing up to the stresses faced by a lawn grass. These, Greenlee said, are the "grails." "Mother Nature already has it figured out, she's on top of it. An ideal grail says, 'I'll just sit here, low to the ground. You can step on me anytime. Just give me some water.' " He pointed out a slight green line in a cleft between the hills, which was greener than the surrounding brown stubble. "That's where you'll find them, in the seeps, in the drainage ditches. You have to look in the soft bosoms of the land; the grails are in the swales."

For several years, Greenlee and a group of like-minded botanists and nurserymen, who call themselves the Prairie Dogs, have been engaged in what he describes as "missionary work in the devastated ecologies." They are looking for the toughest holdouts that might have survived the general slaughter. They are looking everywhere, because the grail will not be a single species—it will be different in each region of the country, as it has adapted to distinct climates, soils, and stresses.

The Prairie Dogs look in streambeds, in ditches and railroad sidings, in spaces in subdivisions where the builders might have neglected to stuff a house, in piles of sand behind shopping malls. Everywhere they go, they stumble over it. In Atlanta, while admiring someone's perennial border, Greenlee noticed that the lawn he was standing on was in fact a clean panel of sedge. He asked the owner, a knowledgeable horticulturalist, what it was, but the man had no idea. All he knew was that he almost never had to mow it. As it turned out, the house had been built before the era of bulldozers, and so the site had never been stripped clean. The local sedge had survived intact and, in time, had taken over the lawn as its own domain. It was beautiful. The Prairie Dogs found *Carex* Baltimore, or Hilltop Sedge, hunkered down in the lawn of an old church in Towson, Maryland. It was a small miracle of benign neglect: the caretakers had never taken enough interest in the state of their turf to spread herbicide on it. In strips of left-over scrub between million-dollar Malibu beach houses, Greenlee has encountered lonely tufts of native salt grass, *Distichlis spicata*.

At his Pomona nursery, Greenlee has started the long process of turning the specimens he's collected into actual lawns. Without the resources to mass-produce them by cloning, he has had to proceed by division, sometimes starting by tearing each clump into several clumps, then waiting patiently until he can divide them again. Most of the time, he simply plugs the tufts into the ground and purposefully forgets about them. Over time, he hopes, the tufts will become panels. "In evaluating a specimen's hardiness," he says, "you have to torture it in the nursery to see what it will do for the average homeowner." Durability is not the only criterion. "The lawn is a state of mind. It's cartoon nature, Disney nature. It has to be the right color. No one wants to look at a grass that isn't green. It has to be low; it can't flop over like a bad-hair day. It has to be inviting, lush, romantic: it has to call you into its bosom. It can't be invasive. And it can't be susceptible to invasion."

By the aesthetic standards of traditional lawn culture, even the grail grasses may, in the end, seem less than ideal. Greenlee concedes that for the natural lawn to become the national lawn, a seismic shift in our subconscious turf ideal will be necessary. Before we can fully welcome nature back into culture, we will have to learn to accept more of it into our lawns, and this will mean being able to appreciate a certain amount of eccentricity—irregularity of blades, motley shades of green, even a little crispy dormancy in winter.

For this to happen, Mother Nature may require some outside help. "There's nature, and then there's horticulture," Greenlee says. "Maybe the grail won't be in nature, maybe we'll get it by crossing the Seattle sedge with the Baltimore sedge and back-crossing it with something else." As we picked our way through the overgrazed hills, the Grassman had a brief reverie. "We'll get the lowest, darkest, cyberüber, dog-urine-proof *Carex*," he muttered. "Then we'll tissue-culture it and produce it by the billions. Or maybe we won't. But I'm an optimist." ♦

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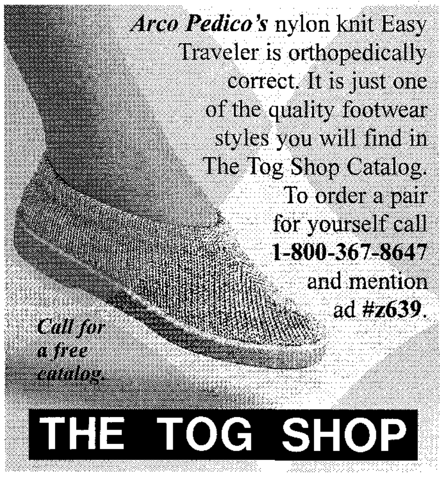
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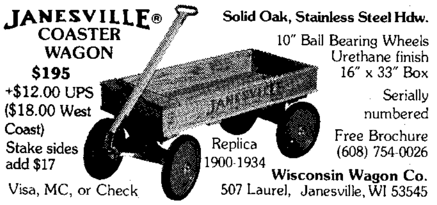
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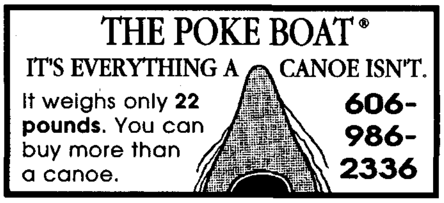
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AMERICAN CHRONICLES

JOHN WAYNE'S BODY

He'll be the presiding ghost at this week's Republican Convention. And, seventeen years after his death, he's America's favorite movie star. What does it all mean?

BY GARRY WILLS

IN 1993, Harris pollsters asked a representative sample of more than a thousand Americans "Who is your favorite star?" John Wayne came in second, though he had been dead for fourteen years. He was second again in 1994. Then, in 1995, he was No. 1, getting more than twice the number of votes that put Mel Gibson in the third spot and nearly six times the number of Paul Newman's votes. Reversing the laws of optics, Wayne seems to become larger the farther away he gets. In the 1995 list, only one other dead actor was included. Here is the list:

1. John Wayne
2. Clint Eastwood
3. Mel Gibson
4. Denzel Washington
5. Kevin Costner
6. Tom Hanks
7. Sylvester Stallone
8. Steven Seagal
9. Arnold Schwarzenegger
10. Robert De Niro
10. Robert Redford
11. Harrison Ford
11. Clark Gable
11. Paul Newman
11. Brad Pitt

The choice for No. 1 in 1993 and 1994 was Clint Eastwood, and he is the star who has ranked second to Wayne in box-office appeal over the years. For twenty-five out of twenty-six years—from 1949 to 1974—Wayne made the top ten in distributors' lists of stars with commercial appeal, and was in the top four nineteen times. Eastwood has been in the top ten on the same lists twenty-one times, and in the top four fifteen times. No other actor approaches these two. But does anyone expect Eastwood to be America's favorite star a decade and a half after his death? Wayne's durability is astonishing.

Much of the critical literature on movies ignores this phenomenon. College professors cannot disguise their skepticism when I say that Wayne is the leading star of all time. "Stagecoach" and "The Searchers" are the only Wayne pictures that regularly get attention from serious film critics, and those two are not characteristic Wayne films. Neither of them was as influential in creating Wayne's popularity as, say, "Sands of Iwo Jima."

Intellectuals have other tastes in cult objects. Their pop icons are figures enlarged by special dooms. These idols tend to die young or violently—Rudolph Valentino, Jean Harlow, James Dean, John Lennon. They fascinate by their vulnerabilities (Elvis, Marilyn) or by their defiance of social norms (Madonna, Michael Jackson). To their devotees, they are murkily erotic objects—Marilyn Monroe to Norman Mailer, Elizabeth Taylor to Camille Paglia, Jacqueline Onassis to Wayne Koestenbaum. Cult figures who live on into old age become caricatures of their rebellious selves—the immured Garbo, Dietrich trickily lit like youth's ghost, Bette Davis imitating her imitators. Or they actually become the things that symbolized them—Charlie swallowed up in the Tramp, Groucho in perpetual ambush behind his eyebrows, Barrymore's profile lingering in the air like the grin of an alcoholic Cheshire cat.

John Wayne never won that kind of cult attention. Yet Wayne-olatry is a larger phenomenon—more consequential (for good or ill) than any of those more specialized legends. Marilyn Monroe was one of the top ten moneymakers of Hollywood only three times—and never one of the top four. Elvis started no wars. Masses of American men did not grow up imitating Valentino.

Though Wayne went to great lengths to avoid military service in the Second World War, General Douglas MacArthur saw him as the model of an American soldier, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars saluted his "Americanism." The critic Eric Bentley held him significantly responsible for America's support of the Vietnam war, and says that it made him "the most important American of our time." Two boys who adored him in "Sands of Iwo Jima" grew up to become, respectively, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and a Vietnam paraplegic. According to Newt Gingrich's stepfather, the young Newt always tried to walk like Wayne—his way of being a man. But Ron Kovic was unmanned by his devotion: "I gave up my dead dick for John Wayne."

Both friends and critics of American foreign policy in the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies said that it was afflicted with a "John Wayne syndrome." President Nixon thought that domestic affairs, symbolically represented for him by the Charles Manson cult-murder case, could be straightened out by the American people's taking Wayne's performance in "Chisum" as a model. Wayne was a hero to the Republicans' hero, Ronald Reagan, who once said that he wanted to make Westerns because "John Wayne, saber in hand, rode right into the number-one box-office spot." During his 1984 reëlection campaign, Reagan made a pilgrimage to Wayne's birthplace in tiny Winterset, Iowa; and he told a group visiting the White House in 1988 that "Wayne understood what the American spirit is all about." In 1979, Congress had a gold medal struck in his honor, with the inscription JOHN WAYNE, AMERICAN. The way to be an American was to be Wayne—a claim given eerie confirmation by the example of the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, John Shalikashvili, who taught himself English, as an immi-

Wayne on the range, 1954. The young Newt Gingrich tried to copy the walk.

grant, by watching Wayne movies. When another immigrant, Henry Kissinger, attributed his diplomatic success to Americans' admiration for cowboys who come into town alone, he was drawing on the Wayne legacy.

Wayne is still the model for American friends of battle. A midshipman at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis told me that he shows his classmates "Sands of Iwo Jima" on Saturday mornings and gets choked up every time he sees it. Pat Buchanan used lines from that movie—"Saddle up" and "Lock and load"—during his primary campaign this year. Oliver Stone made his war-crazed Sergeant Barnes use the same Wayneisms in "Platoon." In Stone's "Natural Born Killers," the murderous Mickey echoes Wayne from "Rio Bravo"—"Let's make a little music, Coloradah"—before spraying bullets. Wayne's cultists buy paintings of him smiling down from heaven. This is the ghostly presence that will hang in the sky over the Republicans' Convention in San Diego, where Bob Dole will be advocating new weapons for space use, and N.R.A. lobbyists will be defending war arsenals in private homes.

San Diego is in Wayne Country. His home was just up the way, in Newport Beach. Some people going to San Diego will pass through the Orange County airport, with its colossal statue of Wayne. In Orange County, the Wayne name is so sacred, according to the novelist Joseph Wambaugh, that softball teams taking jokey nicknames were forbidden to allude to him (it would have been blasphemy). Charlton Heston, the Moses of N.R.A. gun ads, is scheduled to go from the Republican Convention, where he will unveil his own PAC, to a ceremony presenting a posthumous award to Wayne at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles. The Duke doth bestride this narrow world.

For decades, John Wayne haunted the dreams of Americans—making his face, Joan Didion said, more familiar to her than her husband's. The protagonist of Walker Percy's novel "The Moviegoer" remembers Wayne's shoot-out in "Stagecoach" more vividly than the events in his own life.

Other pop icons tend to be young, rebellious, or deviant. Cult loves shadows, and theirs is a mysticism of the dark, of troubled youth and neuroses. Wayne's legend was of a rarer sort—a cult of daylight reality (or what passes for that). The legend came upon him in his maturity. He did not become a top star until he was in his forties, but he remained one until his death, at seventy-two. He was a figure of authority—of the normative, if not the normal. Yet what kind of country accepts as its norm an old man whose principal screen activity was shooting other people, or punching them out?

If one looks for other authority figures in the movies, one finds that they tend to be creaky with wisdom, like Judge Hardy. Spencer Tracy stood more for integrity than authority, and he was not the leading-man type. Robert Young had to leave the movies to become an image of stability on television—in "Father Knows Best" and "Marcus Welby, M.D." Most movie stars are glamorously pitted against authority—Clark Gable, Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, Marlon Brando, Paul Newman. But Wayne, even when he wasn't playing an officer in the Seventh Cavalry, was usually on the sheriff's side.

What can explain this cult so at odds with the general run of cults? Why was Wayne's popularity mainstream and long-lived, rather than fleeting and marginal? Why does he still fill the channels on late-night TV? His fans remain loyal, with their own magazine (*The Big Trail*) and seasonal Western celebrations. A foundry in Oregon offers statues of Wayne in various poses.

Wayne's innate qualities are not enough to explain so large a social fact. He had to have filled some need in his audience. He was the conduit they used for communicating with their own desired selves or their own imagined past. When he was called *the* American, it was a statement of what his fans wanted America to be. For them, Wayne always struck an elegiac note. He stood for an America that people felt was disappearing or had disappeared—for a time "when men were

IN THE GALLERY

Here neither nymph nor naiad ever bathed
nor Saint refreshed herself in pristine water,

here, in The Gallery, between Tie Rack,
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Dad's Pizzas, Message Cards, and Chez
Chocolat, a stream and pool are held

in marble, or simulated marble, banks
with fountains on two levels and a water-

fall, where pumped recirculated water's
splash and gurgle cools or seems to cool

the loud bright air so filled with crowds and hawkers,
bottom agleam with shining coins whose shimmer

reflects the neon clash of colors flashing
on pennies aglitter, gleaming quarters, dimes

tossed in from the concrete shore or flung
from the arched bridge that joins one teeming aisle

of bargains to the other, each coin sent
with a silent, urgent wish to some unseen power—

Dear Goddess of Good Luck, whatever your name now,
please smile on us, who make this place your grove.

—Daniel Hoffman

men." Though some critics agreed with Eric Bentley that he got us into Vietnam, Wayne-olaters thought we lost in Vietnam because not enough John Waynes were left to do what was necessary to win.

The disappearing frontier is the most powerful and persistent myth in American history. It is not a sectional myth but a national one. We do not have "Easterns" or "Southerns," which *would* be sectional. We have Westerns, since, at the outset, America was all frontier. America is the place where European settlers met an alien natural environment and social system. As the frontier moved from the eastern seaboard, Americans experienced, over and over again, the excitement of the "birth moment," when the new world was broken into, tamed, absorbed. James Fenimore Cooper created the archetypal figure for this movement when he sent his Hawkeye, in chronologically ordered novels, from the forests of New York to the Great Lakes and then to the Western prairies, where he died.

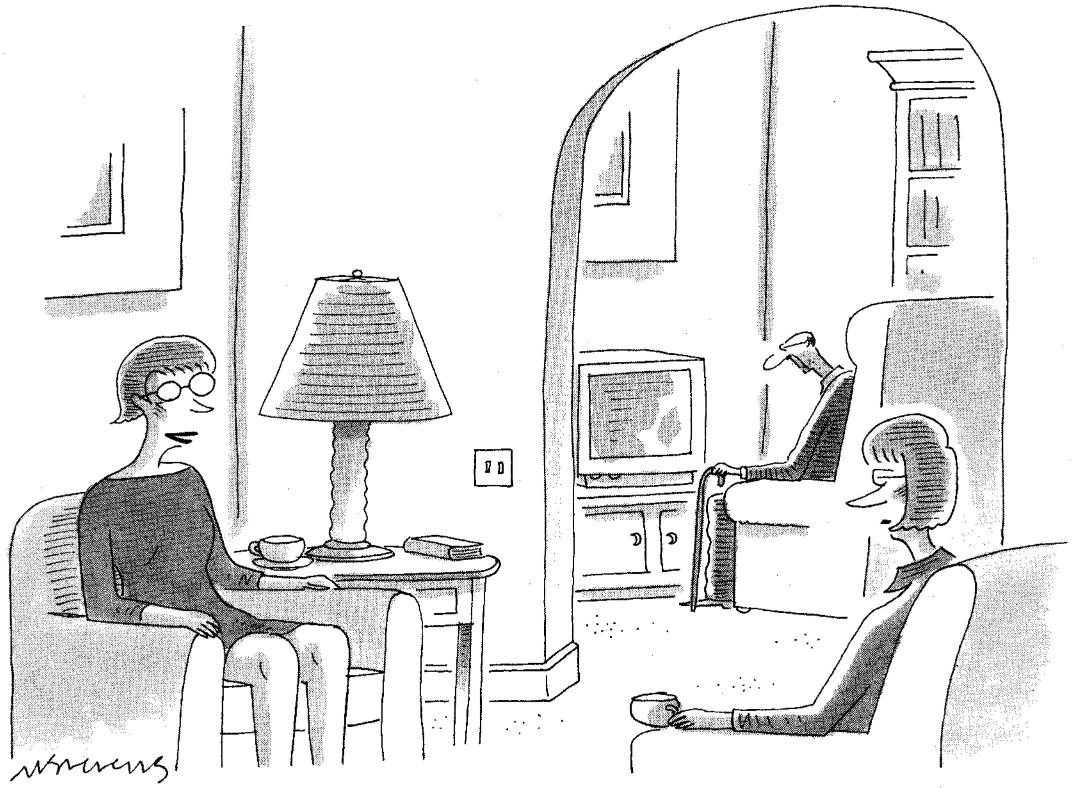
After Hawkeye came other figures who stood for the frontier experience—Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Davy Crockett, Buffalo Bill. These men began in reality but ended in myth. Wayne reverses the process. Beginning in myth, he came to be seen as having entered the company of those who actually lived on the frontier. As a figure in the American imagination, he is closer to Kit Carson than to his fellow-actors. He became so identified with the West that he looked out of place in other cinematic settings—even in his war movies. Gary Cooper was "The Virginian" for a while, or "The Plainsman," but he was also Sergeant York, or Mr. Deeds. Wayne was never quite at ease off the range. His large, rolling walk was baffled by four walls. He was clearly on leave when doing screen duty as a modern soldier—Kit Carson holidaying with the Seabees. In his own clumsy projects, the elephantine "The Alamo" was at least more convincing than the hippopotamine "Green Berets."

Some think Wayne's virtual confinement to Westerns is a sign of his narrow range as an actor. This may be true. But some very good actors have been limited by their success in one kind of role. James Cagney's stuttery urban rhythms made him a misfit in his Western, "The Oklahoma Kid" (1939). Humphrey Bogart, who was in that same misbegotten film, had to wait for the roles that finally defined *him*. He had been out of place in many of his thirties films, with their jumpy pace and crackling dialogue. It took postwar "existentialism" to give Bogart's lassitudinous slump its admired eloquence. A powerful image that defines a star can haunt all his or her later roles. People kept looking for Brando's bluejeans and torn T-shirt under the toga of Mark Antony or the Godfather's business suit. Other actors expressed fleeting moods in the nation: Astaire the sophistication that people yearned for in the thirties, Bogart the romantic cynicism of the fifties. But Wayne was saddled up to ride across the decades.

It may be true that the greatest actors escape this restriction of their image, though even such great Shakespearean players as John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, and Alec Guinness were not normally convincing in heroic roles—just as Olivier could not equal them in comedy. The greatest screen actor, as far as range is concerned, may have been Spencer Tracy, but his very escape from any large type meant that he left few searing images on the imagination. Judith Anderson was a far greater actress than Marilyn Monroe, but she took up little psychic space in the movie audience's dreamworld.

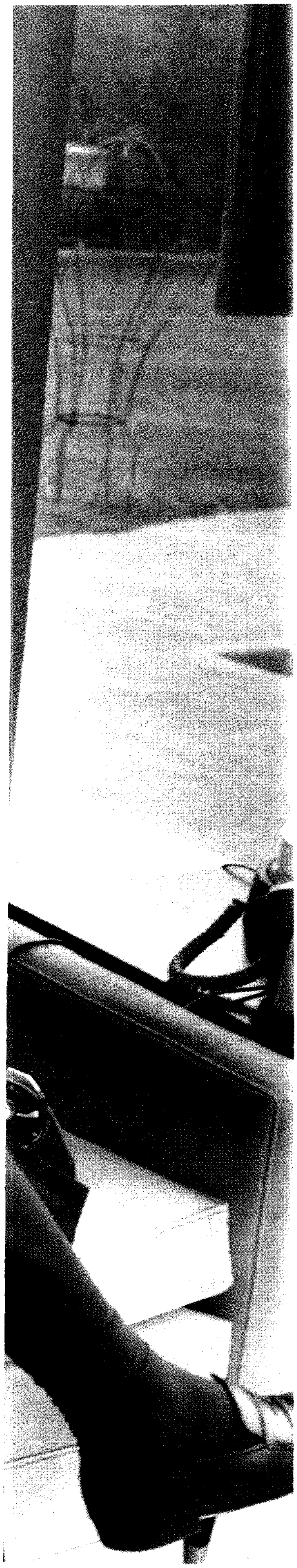
It is less useful to ask how good an actor Wayne was than to look at precisely how he did whatever he did that made him such a towering legend. The easiest and least truthful answer is to say that he was just what he pretended to be on screen. But that was hardly the case. Wayne hated horses, was more accustomed to suits and ties than to jeans when he went into the movie business, and had to remind himself to say "ain't." He aspired, during the long courtship of his first wife, to join the Social Register set in Los Angeles. Wayne was born not Wayne but Marion Morrison, of Winterset, Iowa. He grew up in the Los Angeles suburb of Glendale, and intended to become a lawyer until he lost his football scholarship at the University of Southern California. His fans' myth made him a college star sidelined by an injury—but he dropped out of college before his junior year, and he was soon moving heavy props at Twentieth Century Fox.

Later legend said, as Richard Widmark does, that "John Ford invented John



"Dad's ninety-three, according to the latest carbon-dating techniques."

ARCHIVE PHOTOS



Wayne." Ford and Wayne collaborated busily in nurturing that impression, which proved so useful to them both. But Raoul Walsh was the first director who saw Wayne's potential as a Western star. Walsh was trying to cast a hero for his super-epic of 1930, "The Big Trail." Gary Cooper wasn't available. George O'Brien, Ford's hero in the 1924 epic "The Iron Horse," wasn't quite what Walsh wanted. Then he saw Wayne on the Fox set, and admired the graceful way he moved heavy equipment. That was the effect Walsh was looking for: "The son of a bitch," he said, "looked like a *man*."

Walsh lost no time showing off the physical dexterity of his discovery. In one of the earliest scenes in "The Big Trail," Wayne tiptoes up behind a young woman who is seated on a stool, playing the harmonium. In one easy motion, he puts his hands under her elbows, lifts her, turns her around in the air, and hugs her to him. It is hard to tell how he does it, even as one watches it over and over. He doesn't *throw* her, even slightly, and catch her after she turns; he just handles her as if she were an empty cardboard box, weightless and unresisting.

Wayne's size and strength were always important, even when he lost the sinewy leanness of that first film, done when he was twenty-two. This actor could not be dwarfed by the great outdoors. He seemed more at home there than when stooping to enter the confined space of a cabin, a cavalry barracks, or a tepee. Monument Valley itself could not overpower him. It seemed to breathe a cognate spirit.

Yet sheer size and muscle do not carry one far. There were always larger and more powerful men around Wayne—Victor McLaglen, for instance, who had been a leading man when Wayne was still in high school. What gave Wayne's motions and poses such authority was not just the bulk of his body but the way he used it. It was another director—Howard Hawks this time (still not John Ford)—who finally made Wayne a superstar, in 1948. In "Red River," Wayne has sworn to kill the protégé who stole his cattle herd from him. Having reached the railhead where his herd is milling, Wayne strides toward the camera, the cattle parting before his inexorable motion; he does not even bother to look at them. A gunfighter calls out from behind Wayne, to stop him. But Wayne, in one, fluid motion, pivots while drawing his gun, downs the challenger, and completes the circle of his turn, his regained stride undeterrable as fate. Here was Manifest Destiny on the hoof.

Most critics of "Red River" think its flaw is that the unstoppable Wayne gets stopped. So clearly inevitable is his tread up to the climax that his ultimate collapse seems unconvincing. John Ford had the same problem with his ending to "The Searchers" (1956), throughout which Wayne's deep fires of revenge burn so fiercely that extinguishing them in the final scene looks contrived. Few actors have had this problem of projecting such indomitability that an audience finds it hard to accept their submission. Rather, most actors need to be built up—by camera angles, lighting, costume, being set against a background of crowds, a suppression of others' positions—in order to command a scene. Wayne's power was such that *others* had to be built up, to give him credible opposition. As Hawks put it, "If you don't get a damn good actor with Wayne, he's going to blow him right off the screen, not just by the fact that he's good but by his power, his strength." Wayne was so sure of himself that he didn't have to insist on his prominence as Errol Flynn did during the shooting of "Santa Fe Trail," when Flynn felt that the young Ronald Reagan was getting too much of the foreground. (Reagan countered by secretly building a mound of dirt to make himself taller.) Actors talk about how generous Wayne was with them, trying to give strength to their performances. He knew that his own presence was so powerful that it could not be fully measured against a weak adversary. In describing his standard Westerns, Wayne told the critic Roger Ebert, "Ordinarily they just stand me there and run everybody up against me."

The Western deals with the "taming" of the West. Wayne was uniquely convincing at that task. He looked so fit for the assignment that another problem arose. How, if necessary, do you tame the tamer? After he has broken the resistance, how do you break *him*? It is a difficulty that writers and directors had to address when Wayne's screen characters died. Many people were incredulous when the real-life Wayne died. Andrew McLaglen, his friend (and the director of six of his

Wayne at home, 1955. He hated horses and had to remind himself to say "ain't."

movies), said, "Even after the cancer operations, I never *really* thought Duke could die." If people resisted the mere thought in real life, how could they be made to accept it on the screen?

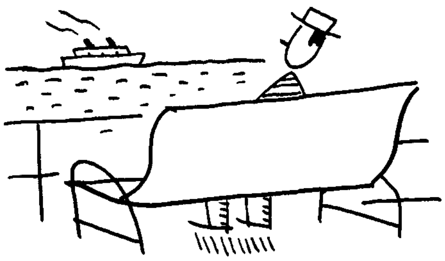
THIS air of invincibility gave Wayne his special status in Westerns. Richard Widmark, who was a personal and political adversary of his, admits, "He was the definitive Western star." Howard Hawks said that he and John Ford "used to discuss how tough it was to make a good Western without Wayne." One can imagine other actors replacing even very good performers in famous Westerns. Henry Fonda could have played Gary Cooper's role in "High Noon." Jimmy Stewart could have taken Fonda's role in "The Ox-Bow Incident." Several actors, out of many, could have equalled Alan Ladd in "Shane." Sergio Leone proved in "Once Upon a Time in the West" that he could make closeups of hard eyes work as well with Fonda as with Eastwood. But no one else could have been as convincingly unswerving as Wayne is in "Red River," "The Searchers," or "Big Jake." Even the jokey "True Grit" worked, because, underneath all the slapstick, it was finally believable that this fat old drunk could face down an entire gang.

Hawks said that the young Wayne moved "like a big cat." Katharine Hepburn spoke of his small feet and the light, dancer's steps he took with them. Harry Carey's wife, Olive Fuller Golden, who was a lifelong friend of Wayne's as well as an acting colleague, said she thought of Nureyev when she saw Wayne walking. Ford's daughter, Barbara, said there was something overpoweringly sexy in the way Wayne sat and rode his horse. Once, when he was drunk, Wayne whimsically turned Marilyn Carey (Olive's daughter-in-law) upside down while dancing with her, and he didn't notice that her face was turning red until Marilyn's husband pointed it out to him. "Duke apologized," Harry Carey, Jr., says. For Wayne, the move was so effortless that it never occurred to him, in his stupor, that it could have a physically trying effect on someone else.

Wayne's control of his body was economical—no motions wasted. This gave a sense of purpose to everything he did. He worked out characteristic stances, gestures, ways of sitting his horse. He learned to choreograph his fight moves with the creative stuntman Yakima Canutt. In stills from his early pictures, even when the face is fuzzy, one can identify Wayne by his pose, his gait, the tilt of his shoulders, the *contrapposto* lean of his hips. Classical sculptors worked out the counterpoised position to convey the maximum of both tension and relaxation, motion and stillness, in the human body: the taut line of the body is maintained through the hip above one leg, which is straight, while on the other side, where the leg is bent, the torso relaxes, deviating from rigid lines. Wayne constantly strikes the pose of Michelangelo's David. Sometimes, with a wider throw of the hips, he becomes Donatello's David. Wayne was very conscious of his effects. Richard Widmark used to laugh when Wayne, directing "The Alamo," shouted at his actors, "Goddammit, be *graceful*—like me!"

When George Plimpton, playing a bit part in Hawks's "Rio Lobo," had to enter a saloon carrying a rifle at waist level, he asked Wayne how to hold it. (Plimpton was holding the gun with the trigger guard near his belt and the stock projecting out behind him.) Wayne took the rifle, jammed its stock against his hip, and held it with one hand so that his whole body leaned into the gun, spoke through it, seemed to be one with it. Wayne twirled a rifle as easily as other cowboys twirl their pistols.

Western stars traditionally identified themselves with elaborate signals worked out through their costume, devices to make people conscious that the hero lived in an entirely different social system. William S. Hart had leather and tough fabrics layered around him almost like armor. Others added to their height with "ten-gallon hats," or to their menace with crossed bandoliers studded with bullets. Some wore two guns at the side, or stuck a single large pistol in the front of their belts. Many used "batwing" chaps to suggest a swooping motion even when they were off their horses. Metal riveted them together, from vest studs down to noisy spurs.



Wayne also had some costuming tricks—his placket-front shirt, dark and semi-military. But his signals were sent by the body under the clothes, which was more semantically charged than they were. His pants were folded up at the cuff, to reveal the gracefulness of his footwork. He dressed to let the body do its work—just as Fred Astaire wore formfitting tuxedos to bring out the line of his body, the calligraphy of its tracings in the air. Wayne's silhouette was enough to identify him. When he made an uncredited appearance on the TV show of his friend Ward Bond, his face was not shown—just his horse looming up in shadow outside a campfire's light—but the way his body was held revealed his identity to anyone familiar with his films.

Wayne created an entire Western language of body signals. The most explicit of them were the Indian signs he often used—paradoxically dainty and slow arcs and swoops made by his large hands ("big as hams," Widmark said) and thick wrists (emphasized by a gold bracelet). His physical autonomy and self-command—the ease and authority of his carriage—made each motion a statement of individualism, a balletic Declaration of Independence.

The whole language cohered—as did the vocal aspect of his performance. Wayne's calculated and measured phrasing gave his delivery the same air of control, of inevitability, that his motions conveyed. He dealt out phrases like dooms: "Touch that gun and I'll kill ya." The stop-and-go rhythm is what all his imitators get, but few capture the melodic intervals of his cadenced speech. As a cavalry officer, he gives the command to his troops in two notes more stirring than the trumpet's: "*Yoh*-oh" (a two-and-a-half-tone drop). Joan Didion's girlhood memory of him was an acoustical one, of the commands he gave. But his throwaway comments, quietly delivered, were just as effective: "*He'll* do" (two-tone drop). I have watched Wayne's films dubbed in Italian, and have been reminded of how much his performance depends on the timbre, the melodic and rhythmic turns, of his voice on the soundtrack.

The most obvious element in Wayne's physical performance is his walk, which became so famous that various people took credit for inventing it and drilling

Wayne on how to do it. Paul Fix, the Western star who worked often with Wayne, claimed that it was he who showed Wayne how to walk in the dramatic scene of "Red River," but Hawks scoffed at the idea: "You don't have to tell Wayne anything about walking through cattle; Wayne knew." Plimpton asked him how the walk was developed, and Wayne finally told him:

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Eric Teitelbaum

"I just downgraded my relationship with Richard from a 'hold' to a 'dump.'"

• •

> "Well, uh, the walk's been kind of a secret in our family for a long time—my dad taught me. But I can't keep it forever. I'll tell you how he taught me. . . ."
>
> "There's a trick to it, is there?"
>
> "You pick up one foot and put it forward and set it down. Then you pick up the other foot and set *it* down—and that's walkin' forward. If you do the reverse, you're *walkin' backward*."

Wayne pooh-poohed the notion that he studied his walk—perhaps because it is "unmanly" for a male to be as conscious of his body's display as, say, Mae West was in rolling her pelvis or Marilyn Monroe in wriggling her behind. Yet Wayne *was* conscious of his effects, as he indirectly revealed in one interview: Ford, who knew how to needle people on their points of pride, would shout at Wayne things like "Dammit, Duke, you're as clumsy as Ward"—meaning Ward Bond. Wayne told an interviewer (Ford's grandson, as it happened), "God knows, if I didn't do anything else, it was move well."

An actor has to project character through his whole body, as Laurence Olivier has said. Hawks made Wayne's motions "age" in "Red River." D. W. Griffith sent his film actresses to study movement with the dance instructor Ruth St. Denis. Actors like Richard Boone went to Martha Graham for the same reason. (She taught Boone to walk like a cat.) John Barrymore made his body reveal the character of Richard III in the way he limped—impeded, but gracefully overcoming the impediment:

> I merely turned my right foot inward, pointing it toward the instep of my left foot. I let it stay in that position and then forgot all about it. I did not try to walk badly. I walked as *well* as I could.

How an actor moves is obviously important in what are, after all, *motion* pictures, but surprisingly little criticism has focussed on this essential aspect of performance. The critic Virginia Wright Wexman used the word "kinesics" to describe Humphrey Bogart's body language—more languorous as a Chandler hero, more nervous as a Hammett one. And perceptive critics have noticed the choreographic grace of particular performers. Graham Greene said that Cagney "danced" his gangster parts "on his light hoofer's feet, with his quick nervous hands." David Thomson saw signs of Burt Lancaster's acrobatic training in the way he moved. Alan Ladd liked to run in little, catlike crouches, turning his small stature into a slithery form of energy. Henry Fonda had a stiff, storklike walk, which set him against the flow of things around him—a sign of integrity in "Young Mr. Lincoln" or "The Grapes of Wrath," of martinet irresponsiveness in "Fort Apache," and detached inhumanity in "Once Upon a Time." What gives the dance in Ford's "My Darling Clementine" its impact is the way the sticklike Fonda becomes more flexible. Cary Grant, like Lancaster, was trained as an acrobat and he can do more with less motion than any other dramatic star. This is because of the way he angles his head away from what he is doing, as if it were a detached thing carried at a careful remove from what his limbs and torso are up to. (Buster Keaton has the same knack in his knockabout comedies.)

Wayne is among the most expressive of those who move about in the moving pictures. People often resist his performance, not because of its quality (good or bad) but because of its content. His body spoke a highly specific language of "manliness," of self-reliant authority. It was a body impervious to outside force, expressing a mind narrow but focussed, fixed on the task, impatient with complexity. This is a dangerous ideal to foster. It is "male" in a way that has rightly become suspect—one-sided, exclusive of values conventionally labelled "female."

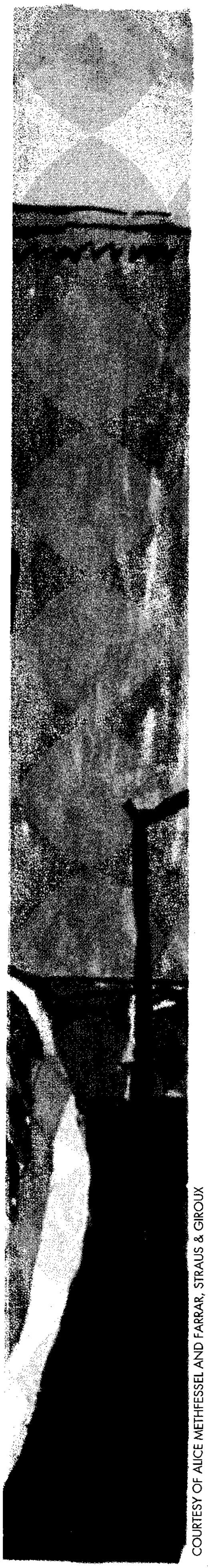
It may seem surprising at a time when gender studies dominate much of film criticism, when essay after essay is devoted to masculinity on the screen, that so little attention is paid to Wayne. Much of the new literature answers the critic Laura Mulvey's claim that a male gaze makes women the sole sex objects of cinema. In the responses to Mulvey, we are given counterexamples of men who have also been the object of sexual "voyeurism." Wayne, wrapped against a hostile environment, does not qualify for the kind of gaze directed at exposed bodies of men in Bible epics, boxing films, or sci-fi fantasies. This gaze is captured in Michel Mourlet's often-quoted effusion:

> Charlton Heston is an axiom. He constitutes a tragedy in himself, his presence in any film being enough to instill beauty. The pent-up violence expressed by the somber phosphorescence of his eyes, his eagle's profile, the imperious arch of his eyebrows, the hard, bitter curve of his lips, the stupendous strength of his torso—this is what he has given, and what not even the worst of directors can debase. It is in this sense that one can say that Charlton Heston, by his very existence and regardless of the film he is in, provides a more accurate definition of the cinema than films like *Hiroshima mon amour* or *Citizen Kane*, films whose aesthetic either ignores or repudiates Charlton Heston. Through him, *mise en scène* can confront the most intense of conflicts and settle them with the contempt of a god imprisoned, quivering with muted rage. In this sense, Heston is more a [Fritz] Langian that a [Raoul] Walshian hero.

The conservative Charlton Heston might be surprised at becoming such an object of "the male gaze." When Gore Vidal wrote a homosexual infatuation with Heston's character into the script of "Ben-Hur," the director, William Wyler, said, "Don't *you* say a word to Chuck."

Wayne has largely escaped such metaphysical attention. He is neither the naked god nor the troubled adolescent. Gender criticism that defines "masculinity" has been most concerned with conflicted maleness in figures like James Dean, Montgomery Clift, or Marlon Brando. Maleness is acutely experienced at points where it is doubted or questioned. Wayne seems too obtuse to question his own macho swagger, and this means that he can be dismissed without an analysis. It is telling that when casting "sensitive" roles Ford did not choose Wayne, but Henry Fonda or James Stewart—and they *have* been the object of masculinity studies.

By an odd turn of history, recent analyses of masculinity have less interesting things to say about Wayne than ancient Roman critics of male performance do. In the militaristic Roman society, a man's persuasiveness depended very much on his stance (*status*) and his walk (*gressus, gradus*). Cicero, in his book "The Orator," describes the ideal speaker, in a culture where speaking well was an exercise



COURTESY OF ALICE METHFESSEL AND FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX

EASEL BY ELIZABETH BISHOP

"I'd love to be a painter," the poet Elizabeth Bishop once remarked. She made watercolors and collages all her life—mostly as gifts for friends. The poet and art critic William Benton has collected forty of them—the watercolor on the left dates from the nineteen-forties—in a book to be published this fall. Its title is "Exchanging Hats," after a Bishop poem that the late James Merrill used to read aloud with incomparable charm and feeling.

The poems below, previously unpublished, were found in the Bishop archive, at Vassar College. ("Eye-fee," in "Foreign-Domestic," is the word "hi-fi" as pronounced by Bishop's Brazilian companion, Lota de Macedo Soares.)

FOREIGN-DOMESTIC

I listen to the sweet "eye-fee."
From where I'm sitting I can see
across the hallway in your room
two bare feet upon the bed,
arranged as if someone were dead
—a non-crusader on a tomb.
I get up, take a further look.
You're reading a "detective book";

so that's all right. I settle back.
The needle in its destined track
stands true and from the daedal plate
an oboe starts to celebrate
escape from the violin's traps
a bit too easily, perhaps,
for twentieth-century taste, but then
Vivaldi pulls him down again.
Said Blake, "And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase . . . "

"A LOVELY FINISH . . ."

A lovely finish I have seen
Upon a sand flat glassed with sky,
or with a gold-leaf film of sea
re-brushed, re-grained by random cloud.
Can one accuse of artifice
such finishes and surfaces?

When in the dawn you turned to speak
and waited for my teeth to touch
the sugared coolness on that cheek
—the other cheek—I found in such
deliberation of caress
the utmost of your worldliness.

—ELIZABETH BISHOP
(1911-1979)

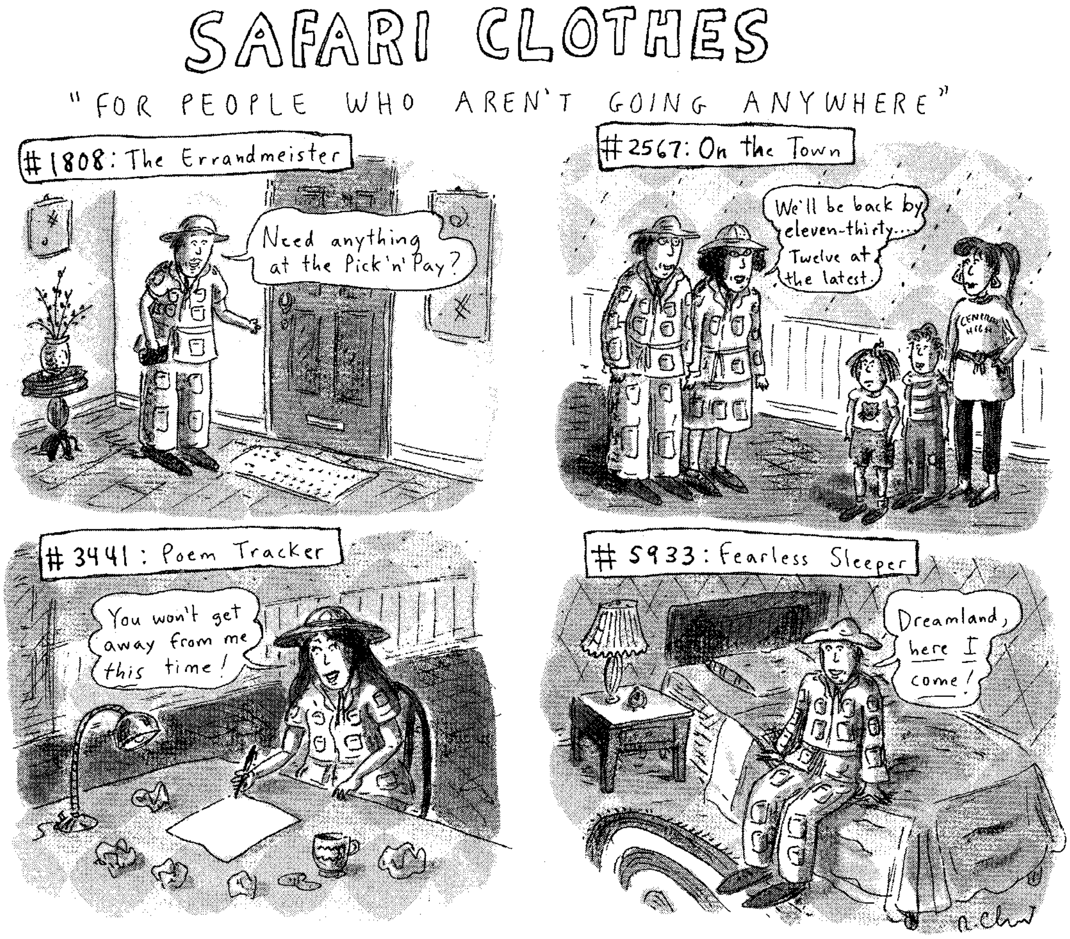
in performance art. It sounds as if Cicero had just been watching Wayne films:

> He must practice an economy of movement, with no extraneous effort—the carriage of his body straight and lofty; his pacing measured and kept within bounds; lunging only to the point, and rarely; without effeminacy in turning his head; no little stage business with his hands; no "conducting himself" to a beat; but governing himself in the expression of his whole body, with a manly torsion from the waist; using powerful gestures when moved, and none at all when calm.

In Rome, military rule was the highest virtue, and the most debilitating accusation was one of effeminacy. Cicero said that orators should learn grace of movement from wrestlers, should stamp their feet in a manly (not a petulant) way, should consider the whole body (the *motus corporis*) even more important than the words of a speech. Lucian drew the same picture—"a strong man, of understated power, virile stride, skin toughened by the outdoors, eyes hard and on the lookout." The Roman Empire dreamed constantly of John Wayne.

Why this echo of a lost classical world? Rome trained its citizens for war. Its empire depended on a mystique of legions intelligently led. The Seventh Cavalry in John Ford's "cavalry trilogy" ("Fort Apache," "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon," "Rio Grande") has the legionary spirit—far more than do the quaintly armored "Romans" of Cecil B. De Mille's historical epics. More important, the America of Ford's time had the sense of an *imperial* burden, which came to it with the Second World War and the Cold War. America submitted to a discipline of protracted struggle which made the President a full-time Commander-in-Chief even of non-military citizens. Citizens were under scrutiny for their loyalty to the war effort. Security clearances, classification of secrets, lists of subversive organizations, loyalty oaths, secret funding of the C.I.A., internal surveillance by the F.B.I., the expensive buildup of an arsenal and of space defenses—all these things were embraced as the price of defending the free world.

Wayne's time of maximum popularity coincided with this immense societal effort, and he internalized its demands in his own life as well as in his films. In 1949, he became the president of the Commie-hunting Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, a role in which he took credit for running Carl Foreman, the screenwriter for "High


SAFARI CLOTHES
"FOR PEOPLE WHO AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE"
#1808: The Errandmeister
Need anything at the Pick'n'Pay?
#2567: On the Town
We'll be back by eleven-thirty... Twelve at the latest.
CENTRAL HIGH
#3441: Poem Tracker
You won't get away from me this time!
#5933: Fearless Sleeper
Dreamland, here I come!

Noon," out of the country. In 1960, he joined the John Birch Society. He tied his own greatest financial project, the making of "The Alamo," to the electoral struggle of 1960, in which he declared that *real* patriots should support Richard Nixon. His ad for the movie took a slap at the Democratic candidate, John F. Kennedy, whose authorship of "Profiles in Courage" was being questioned: "There were no ghostwriters at the Alamo." He defended the war in Vietnam, and made "The Green Berets" as a personal statement on that conflict. Although the mystique of some Westerns has been one of freedom and individualism, of a creative anarchy, Wayne's movies stressed the need for *regimentation* as necessary to survival under threat. Almost by accident, this reflected conditions in the real West of the eighteen-sixties through the eighteen-nineties more accurately than did the myth of emancipated spirits on the frontier.

Wayne-olatry grew in such a climate. It is the greatest popular expression of the tension of muted struggle in those decades—1940 through 1980. What followed, in terms of Hollywood symbols, is a reversion to radical individualism. The ending of the Cold War should have been a comforting development, but it was also seen as the end of empire. America *lost* Vietnam, with a corresponding breakdown in its internal imperial discipline, which led to a sense of drift, a new awareness of crime as unravelling the social fabric. It is significant that gender studies of movie masculinity have added a third item to their treatment of naked gods and troubled boys: the "hard bodies" of the post-Vietnam era—men engaged in revenge fantasies. Rambo goes after the abandoned relics of empire in Vietnam. ("Do we get to win this time?") Rocky Balboa beats the Russian giant when Rocky's government has to confine itself to nuclear standoff. Dirty Harry goes after the punks who have made the city a jungle, using tactics forbidden to the ineffective police force. Citizens must take up arms, alone or in private militias, since the government has failed its subjects, abroad and at home. Conan the Barbarian, created on the screen by John Milius (the same man who gave Dirty Harry his swagger), becomes an avenger when his entire village is wiped out. In Milius's "Red Dawn," teen-agers must fight for a government that adults have surrendered.

The sense of opposing tremendous odds, of standing against the whole of legitimate society, calls for a hypertrophy of the individual's musculature and weaponry. Stallone and Schwarzenegger are fitted out with bodies that are nothing but body armor. Stripped naked, they carry huge cannons and automatic firing systems. Dirty Harry's gun gets longer and longer, blowing away whole phantom structures of evil, not just single bad guys.

The note of these films is rage. Wayne did not normally have the contempt for his opponent that Dirty Harry does. The Wayne hero, in a time of the empire's dominance, could be calm. His self-discipline was counted on to awe or attract others. The mature Wayne was lightly weaponed—a rifle, or one pistol, and he often did not have to use that. He faced down foes. A villain in the "shoot-out" is undone by Wayne's stride as he comes down the street.

The individualism of the Rambos is conveyed by their naked bodies. They wear no uniform—not even that of normal civil society. Bruce Willis's "Die Hard" police hero ends up shorn of civilized symbols (including shoes and shirt), though large firing systems are magically available. The Seventh Cavalry is not going to ride to the rescue, so why put on its epaulets? There is no one and nothing to turn to but one's gun. As his father tells Conan in Milius's film, "No one in this world can you trust—not men, not women, not beasts. This [steel] you can trust."

Though some critics have found homoeroticism in the classic Westerns, more have explored its presence in the narcissism of the bodybuilders, Stallone and Schwarzenegger, or in the phallic elongations of Dirty Harry's gun. (Anticipating a homophobic reaction, the Dirty Harry films occasionally plant homosexuals for Harry to mock, dissociating himself from them.)

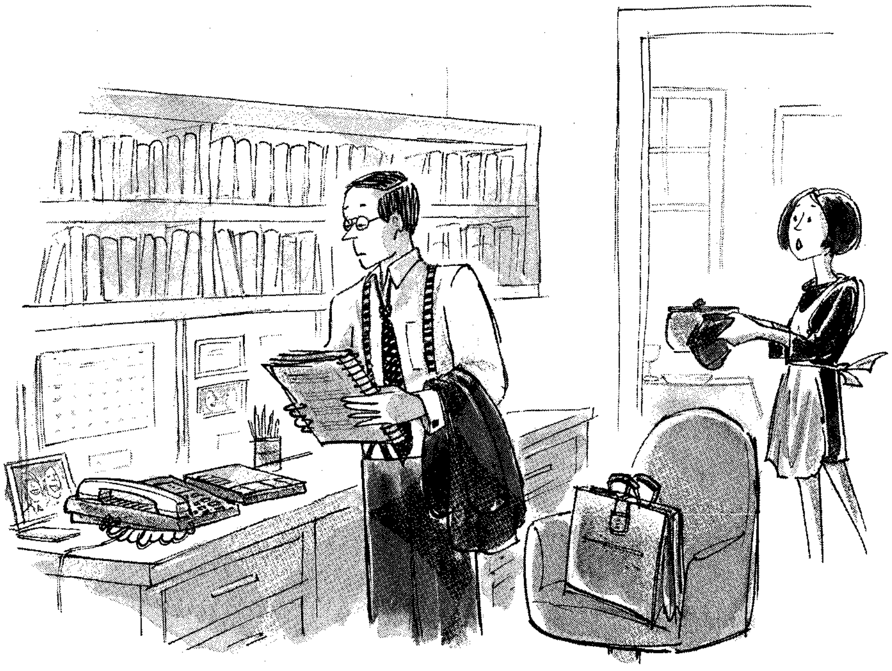
The rage of these avenger movies—or the nihilism and apocalyptic violence of Sergio Leone's and Sam Peckinpah's Westerns—may make Wayne and Ford look moderate in retrospect. In Peckinpah's "The Wild Bunch," lives previously meaningless acquire validity in the apocalyptic ending that brings down "the system." Conan says that winning is less important than the fact "that two stood against many."

Wayne helped articulate the system that could not sustain its mission of a Pax Americana. The imperial reach led to the post-imperial letdown. In that sense, we owe Rambo to Wayne, even though Rambo seems to reject what Wayne stood for. The strength of Wayne was that he embodied our deepest myth—that of the frontier. His weakness was that it was only a myth. Behind the fantasies of frontier liberation, as the historian Patricia Limerick reminds us, was a reality of conquest. And conquest itself has a way of undoing the conquerors.

A MYTH does not take hold without expressing many truths. They are misleading truths, usually, but important ones: truth, for one thing, to the needs of those who elaborate and accept the myth; truth to the demand for some control over complex realities; truth to the recognition of shared values (however shakily grounded those values may actually be). Even the myths that simplify reality are not, in themselves, simple. It is true that Westerns work with a body of conventional situations (though a larger, more flexible body of them than most people realize). But Japanese noh plays, ancient Greek tragedy, and the commedia dell'arte also work within strict conventions—a fact that does not deprive them of subtlety or nuance. Myth works best in such established frameworks. The Western can raise serious moral questions because it deals with the clash of entirely different social systems—not only the clash of Native Americans or Mexicans or Chinese "coolies" with European colonizers but that of earlier colonizers with later ones. The technology that is the white man's friend becomes his enemy as waves of exploitation wash in and overlap prior waves.

Wayne was not just one type of Western hero. He is an innocently leering ladies' man in his B films of the thirties, a naïf in "Stagecoach," an obsessed adolescent in "Shepherd of the Hills," a frightened cattle capitalist in "Red River," a crazed racist in "The Searchers," a dutiful officer in cavalry pictures, the worldly-wise elder counsellor in some later movies. He is sometimes a hothead, more often the restrainer of hotheads. So it is not true that Wayne always played the same role. But it is true that all his work, especially in the Westerns, was part of one project—to build a persona full of portent, to maintain a cumulative authority in his bearing. Wayne was careful about the persona, about not accepting roles that would endanger it. He refused to play a coward for Howard Hawks. He refused to shoot a man in the back for Don Siegal. He would be villainous but not weak. An early small part, in "The Life of Jimmy Dolan," showed that he could play a coward, but later it was one of the things "John Wayne" did not do. Creating that artifact was the lifelong project of the man behind the image, regardless of his name (Marion Morrison, Duke Morrison, Duke Wayne). Wayne was helped along the way by directors, writers, producers, cameramen, costumers, friends, and critics, and he was hindered by an assortment of the well-meaning, the diffident, the sycophantic, but he kept strenuously to his own program—to create a "self" so real to others that he could disappear into it, as he did.

He finally became what he had projected on the screen—a hollow triumph, for what was that but the figment of other people's imaginations? Wayne's own story is a large one—as large as the truths, the societal evasions, the lies of which his screen image was confected. It produced some film masterpieces (along with a large body of clinkers). It involved some of the greatest talents in filmmaking—John Ford, Howard Hawks, Raoul Walsh, Joe August, Archie Stout, Winton Hoch, Bert Glennon, William Clothier, Dudley Nichols, Frank Nugent, Henry Fonda, Maureen O'Hara. It also involved all Americans, whether we knew it or not. We are entangled in his story: by the dreams he shaped or inhibited, in us or in others; by the things he validated and those he scorned; by the particular definition he gave to "being American." All of this influenced us—whether, with Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, we accepted the definition or, with Eric Bentley, tried to renounce or discredit it. The less we advert to what he did to us, the less we can cope with it. Many of those Republicans who will be milling around in San Diego are still haunted by the dreams that explain Wayne's continuing popularity. Down the street of the twentieth-century imagination, that figure is still walking toward us—graceful, menacing, inescapable. ♦



"Oh, there's also a message of inclusion from Bob Dole."

A REPORTER AT LARGE

KID, TWELVE

Who are the forgotten voters? People like Brian Tomberlind's family aren't on welfare, and don't live below the poverty line. But they are still struggling Americans. What does life look like to Brian?

BY SUSAN SHEEHAN

ON a brisk Saturday afternoon in March, Brian Tomberlind, age twelve, sets off for the Hickory Hollow Mall just outside Nashville, with his mother, Penny Proctor, and his best friend, Carl. Brian's father, Nathan Tomberlind, stays at home, lying on the living-room sofa wrapped in a blanket. He has hepatitis C. Five months of interferon shots, the only approved treatment for the grave illness, have not put it in remission; they just made him feel weaker. "Nathan probably wouldn't go to the mall with us even if he felt normal," Penny says. "He don't like shopping when he ain't got money to spend. Me and Brian don't go often enough to get our hopes up, but we like looking around." Brian enjoys going to places like malls with his mother, and he gives her money for gas from his earnings, if she needs it, to get there. Penny is more at ease with herself than Nathan is, and this quality translates into ease with her son. When Brian is away from Nathan, he relaxes and seems to forget the troubles of his house.

Penny parks the family's black Mazda pickup and walks with the boys to the front of the Castner Knott department store; they giggle as they pass through the women's lingerie section on their way to a tier of small shops that line the mall's interior. At Pass Pets, the boys admire a variety of pedigreed dogs in glass cages and a selection of rats; they try in vain to coax the store's parrot to talk; they stop at a showcase of Teddy-bear hamsters and an adjacent showcase of green iguanas. The showcases are open on top. Ignoring numerous "Do Not Pick Up" signs, Brian reaches in, plucks a hamster out of its cage, and suspends it over the iguana cage. "Brian, don't be doing that," Penny says. "If you drop it in with them lizards, the hamster could have a heart attack and die." The hamster wriggles, and Brian accidentally does drop it in among the iguanas. Penny looks scared.

"Them iguanas is vegetarians," Carl assures her, and then says to Brian, "Their tongues don't hurt you. They would get you with their tails." Brian reaches in for the hamster and puts it back where it belongs.

At a store called the World of Science, Brian and Carl inspect talking jigsaw puzzles, kaleidoscopes, Spin Master devil sticks, and glow-in-the-dark stars. "This is my favorite store in the mall," Brian says. "It's got cool stuff." Brian is a lanky kid (he's five feet two inches tall and weighs ninety-eight pounds) with indigo eyes, angular features, and fine blond hair that has a home-cut look—Penny snips it with her scissors.

At Brian's second-favorite mall store, Spencer Gifts, he tries on a purple cap with a visor in front and a blond ponytail in back. "You look cute," Carl says, and tries on a headpiece with spiky "Wayne's World" hair in back. "*You* look cute," Brian retaliates.

The boys proceed to a shelf filled with Old Fart Slippers, X-rated greeting cards, Whipped Creme Body Topping, and bottles of PMS pills. "You-all know you can't look in there," Penny says, and then asks, "Brian, what does PMS mean?"

"Poor Man's Suffering," he replies. "I heard it on TV." He knows that PMS really stands for "premenstrual syndrome," because he studied sex ed last year in fifth grade and because his parents are forthright with him about the biological facts of life. When Brian was ten, Penny thought she heard him asking her what a condo was. "It's like a town house," she replied. "No, Mama, a condom," he said. She catalogued its virtues.

Brian asks Penny for five of the ten dollars she owes him. He earned the money two weeks ago at a construction site by picking up pieces of drywall and insulation for Sam, a man his father worked for when he was still healthy enough to work. Brian lent the ten dollars to Penny because she needed "money to run on." He buys a can of green Super String 2 for three dollars. He buys a space-age ice cream for two dollars, and offers Carl and Penny pieces of his treat.

"It ain't cold," Penny says. "You could of saved the money."

"But I wanted it," he says.

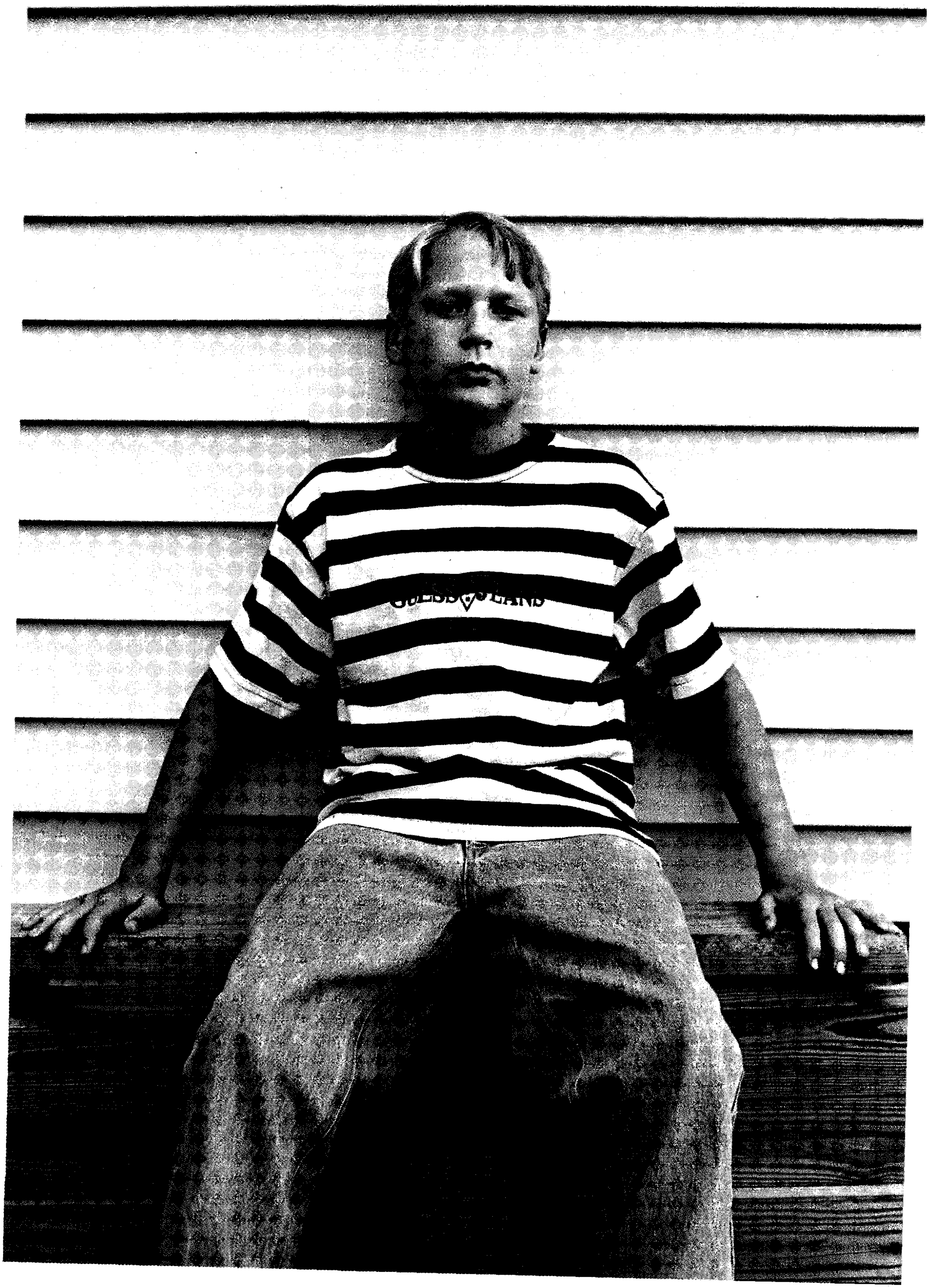
"Stuff like that amazes Brian," she says. "He ain't had money lately, so when he gets some he spends it quick."

WHEN Penny and Brian return home, Nathan is still wrapped in a blanket on the sofa. Always a thin man—he is five feet nine and used to weigh a hundred and fifty-five pounds—he is down to a hundred and thirty-five pounds. "I got fever and chills real bad," he says. "That medicine ain't making me better, it's making me worse." He shifts to his son. "Brian, what about your multiplication tables?"

Penny Proctor, who is thirty-three, and Nathan Tomberlind, who is thirty-six, did a lot of "drinkin' and druggin' " from the time they were in their early teens until Brian was six. In March, 1990, while Nathan was in jail for driving under the influence, he decided to sober up; he went through a treatment program while incarcerated. Penny stopped using on her own. She had done less drinking than Nathan after she discovered that she was pregnant and after Brian's birth. Moreover, she had never injected herself with drugs. "I'll be hon-

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BARRON CLAIBORNE

Brian (opposite) at his home in Nashville, Tennessee.


GUESS JEANS

est with you, I think I got hepatitis C from dirty needles," Nathan says.

Nathan had always had a bad temper and was prone to moodiness, but his temper got worse after he learned that he had the illness, in the fall of 1994. His moods darkened as well, and Brian felt even more edgy around his father. Nathan's illness and his inability to work have given him more time to focus on his son. Several months ago, part of Brian's homework was to put thirty words "in 'ABC' order" and then define them. He borrowed a classmate's completed assignment, "not because I couldn't do it but to get it done faster," and went into his room after school. He sat on his bed—he doesn't have a desk—copying away. When Nathan entered his bedroom, Brian covered the paper. "Give it to me, Bubba," Nathan said. It was the second time Brian had borrowed his classmate's homework but the first time he had been caught. Nathan telephoned the school principal, who summoned Brian to his office. "You're one of our best students," the principal told him. "If we didn't have people like you at school, the school would be bad. You know your daddy loves you or he wouldn't have done this. Don't do it again, or you'll be in major-league trouble." Nathan kept Brian indoors for several afternoons after the cheating episode. Asked if he had learned his lesson, Brian answered, "Yeah. I know if I cheat I'll be punished."

Nathan's current obsession is Brian's failure to memorize his multiplication tables. He is determined that Brian will master them before the last day of sixth grade. Brian has trouble with math and is lazy about learning multiplication. On this late-March afternoon, when Nathan asks him what six times six is, he doesn't know. He seems to hope that Nathan will forget about multiplication between March and the end of May.

On Sunday morning, the Tomberlinds dress casually. Brian is wearing a green T-shirt with a white Nike swoosh logo, which he bought with most of the money Sam gave him for his birthday the previous month. Nathan drives from their house, in south Nashville, to Cumberland Heights treatment center in the city's rural outskirts, where the family attends spiritual services.

Penny Proctor and Nathan Tomberlind. Trying to pay off a mortgage, raise Brian, and save for the future on twenty-two thousand dollars a year.

In December, 1994, the Tomberlinds had a brief relapse. Nathan started smoking marijuana, Penny smoked a joint and, after an operation on her foot, started taking more pain medication than the doctor had prescribed for her; Nathan helped himself to Penny's pain pills. "I went back to A.A. on December 29th—that's my birthday—and picked up a desire chip," Nathan says. "I'd been over four years sober, from 1990 to 1994, but in 1995 I couldn't get past my thirty-day chip." There was a crisis in August, 1995. Nathan hit Brian with a belt—hard. Penny left the house, taking Brian with her to the home of one of her sisters. Nathan smashed three glass tables and two lamps, broke some dishes, and drank for three days.

"I hit bottom," Nathan acknowledges. His remorse led him to spend two weeks in treatment at Cumberland Heights. After the first week, he telephoned Penny and begged her to join him. "Baby, this is our opportunity to get straightened out and work through our problems," he said. Penny's boss gave her a week off so that she could commute to Cumberland Heights for family treatment. "I learned a lot about myself at Al-Anon," Penny says. "I learned how sick I was, how much I needed to be my own person, that I had to stand up for myself when Nathan yelled at me or tried to switch words around in my head, and that I couldn't put my sobriety on his."

After two weeks, the Tomberlinds continued treatment at a Cumberland Heights center in their neighborhood. Penny asked their counsellor, Joy, if she could bring Brian with them. "At first, Joy said she didn't think an eleven-year-old would have the patience to sit still for two hours, but he was real quiet and he participated," Penny says.

"When I was asked to give a 'feeling word,' I did," Brian says. "I said I was scared when my parents started back using after four years, especially of Dad's cussing and yelling, and angry when they didn't listen to me, and glad when Dad went into treatment. I thought it would have a good result, because when he did it before it worked for a long time. And I learned that a lot of other people had troubles."

Joy told Penny that Brian astounded her—that he had handled a rough situation with a wisdom beyond his young years, and with a forgiving nature. "He's a kid hero," Joy said.

Sometimes the Tomberlinds eat a big buffet dinner at Cumberland Heights, but it costs six dollars apiece, and on this mild Sunday they don't have the money, so they go home and eat a big dinner, most of which has been simmering in Penny's Crock-Pot for five hours. Brian has an ample plateful of pot roast, turnip greens, carrots, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, peaches, and bread. "I like pickles, lemons with salt, Brussels sprouts, squash, okra, cabbage, corn, green beans, strawberries, and coconuts, and Nana's breakfasts," he says.

Nana is Nathan's mother. "She's the only relative I got who ain't messed up," Brian says. This spring, two of Penny's sisters, Nathan's only brother, and a cousin of Brian's were in jail for drug-related offenses.

Some of Brian's Super String 2 has got caught in the blades of the living-room ceiling fan. "Brian, get it off," Nathan says. "I told you not to do it, you don't listen, and you're stubborn, just like me." After Brian steps up on the coffee table, reaches up, and removes the strands, Nathan appends a "Thank you." Brian cleans his bathroom (a weekly chore), wheels his racing bike out of the storage room, and pedals across the street to Carl's house.

The Tomberlinds live in a new eleven-hundred-square-foot ranch house with gray vinyl siding, which they are buying under the auspices of a Nashville community organization that is trying to keep their neighborhood from turning as commercial and desolate as an adjacent section. The house is on a street with other modest homes, public housing, and trailers. They live within earshot of the Nashville Speedway U.S.A., and on weekends they hear the roar of NASCAR races. Saturday nights, two neighbors tend to drink, brawl, and drive their own souped-up cars up and down the street, and other neighbors use and sell drugs. Brian has lived in ten small houses and apartments ("holes in the wall") and trailers since he was born. The worst one was a trailer where he slept on the top bunk of a double-decker bed and the first of Nana's two ex-husbands slept on the bottom bunk. "He drunk and he stunk," Brian says. His current home is "the biggest and best place," and the first house his parents have tried to buy. It has three bedrooms (one is being used as a storage room), two bathrooms, a living room/dining room, and a kitchen. The walls, which Brian helped his parents paint, are white. A glass dining-room table and four velour chairs originally belonged to Nana, as did the living-room sofa and a large chair. The few books the family owns are on the bottom rung of the TV stand, next to the VCR.

On Sunday afternoon, Brian and Carl ride their bicycles until Penny and Lisa, Carl's mother, are ready to go walking. They load the bikes—Brian's Mongoose Menace and Carl's Mongoose Expert—into the back of the black truck and drive a short distance to a track at an abandoned school. Penny, who is five feet seven and has long, fluffy, layered brown hair, has been overweight since her teens. Since she and Lisa started walking for thirty minutes a day several months ago—most weekends and most weekdays after Penny gets home from work—her weight has dropped from two hundred and twenty-two pounds to two hundred and seven. Brian welcomes a brief change of scene. Sunday evening his supper is crackers with peanut butter from a large can labelled "Donated by the people of the U.S.A. for Food Assistance Program," a surplus-food commodity that Nana's first ex-husband receives and passes along to him. Brian watches a video, one of four that Penny, after attending Overeaters Anonymous, rented for the weekend for four dollars and eighty-six cents. Although Penny is more concerned about her weight than about relapsing into drugs, pills, or alcohol, she and Nathan both go to a Cumberland Heights aftercare program one evening a week, and Nathan goes alone to three A.A. meetings a week. At nine, Brian looks at the clock, hugs and kisses his parents, and says, "Good night, I love you, sweet dreams, and say your prayers."

On Monday morning, Nathan drives Penny to work. Since Brian was three, she has operated machines for a company that manufactures T-shirts, working "from eight-thirty to four-thirty and any overtime I can get." Then Nathan drops Brian off at Nana's apartment for breakfast and goes on to keep a doctor's appointment. Brian quickly and quietly puts away three fried eggs, two strips of bacon, three biscuits, and a glass of milk, carries his plate to the sink, and lies down on the living-room sofa to watch TV. He likes watching TV at his grandmother's. "We don't got cable or a remote control at home," he says, hopscotching the channels from "Family Challenge" to "Let's Make a Deal" and on to "Rugrats." At eight-fifteen, Nana drives Brian to Glenview Elementary School, which has three hundred and sixty-three students in kindergarten and grades three to six. Grades one and two are held at another school, because of a complicated court order desegregating Nashville's schools.

At the end of the 1994-95 school year, Glenview was forty-seven per cent white, forty-four per cent black, 6.6 per cent Hispanic, and 1.6 per cent Asian. Approximately twenty-five per cent of the students are bused from an inner-city housing project, and the majority of them are from single-parent homes. One of the four excuses that Glenview deems legitimate for an absence is "illness in the family requiring temporary help from the child." Glenview is a Title I school, one that qualifies for congressionally funded assistance, because it is among the schools that have a high concentration of children in poverty, meaning children eligible for free or reduced-price lunches—sixty-three per cent of the students, in Glenview's case. (Title I money and programs date back to 1965, as part of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty.)

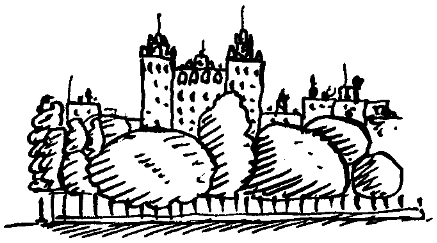
Brian Lee Tomberlind is one of a million nine hundred and eight thousand twelve-year-old boys living in the United States. Like the overwhelming majority of them, he is white (eighty per cent) and he attends a public school (eighty-nine per cent). In 1995, Penny earned eighteen thousand and twenty-three dollars and Nathan thirty-seven hundred dollars. Those earnings, of twenty-one thousand seven hundred and twenty-three dollars, put the Tomberlinds in the bottom quarter of American wage earners but above the poverty line, which was twelve thousand one hundred and fifty-six dollars for a family of three last year. The Tomberlinds receive no subsidies from the federal government, but since Nathan's illness was diagnosed he has been on TennCare, a program that Tennessee created as an alternative to Medicaid, the federally financed health insurance for the poor and the disabled.

As a member of a three-person household with an income below twenty-three thousand two hundred and ninety-two dollars, Brian qualifies for reduced-price breakfasts and lunches at Glenview, but Penny prefers to give him full-fare lunch money—a dollar and fifteen cents per day—to spare him the embarrassment that she felt as a child about receiving free school lunches. When Penny is short of cash, Nana provides lunch money. "I wouldn't mind getting free lunch if we needed it," Brian says. The kids at Glenview don't care who does or doesn't get reduced-price or free meals at school, but Brian says some of them taunt a boy in his class about his shabby clothes, because his mother spends most of her money on drugs. "The teachers are nice," he says. "They buy him clothes." Brian is not a teaser of others, because he is sensitive and good-hearted. "I wouldn't want no one talking about my clothes," he says. "It would make me feel bad." Brian is self-conscious about his wardrobe and was pleased that all his twelfth-birthday presents from his family were clothes: Nana bought him a gray sweatshirt with a hood and a pair of shiny navy nylon pants, and Penny bought him a pair of jeans. At any given time, he has about a dozen outfits in his closet and three pairs of sneakers—usually last season's model of a name brand bought for forty dollars or less at a discount shoe store.

There are twenty-nine students in Brian's homeroom. Two are currently in foster care—one girl because her father is in prison for murdering her mother; another girl spent last year in foster care. Several live with grandmothers, several with mothers and "bad stepfathers," many with mothers and "mean boyfriends," and many with single mothers. A few have been sexually abused. Very few live with their biological mother *and* father, as Brian does now. He was born Brian Lee Proctor and delivered by a midwife at Metropolitan Nashville General, a public hospital. He lived with his mother's family off and on until he was three. His parents married when he was four and a half, and his surname was then changed to Tomberlind. His parents occasionally separated, Brian always staying with Penny, but they got back together quite soon. Glenview calls itself a "high-transit" school. Of the twenty-nine boys and girls now in Brian's sixth-grade homeroom, only six others have been there since third grade, as he has.

Although Brian's situation is singular, his life and the lives of his classmates are representative of the few-frills lives of children of the working poor. The farthest that Brian has ever been from Nashville is Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where he, his parents, and Nana spent a weekend in 1993. Middle-class customs are not ones he takes for granted. So far, he has had only three "cake birthdays"—birthday parties when he could invite other kids over for cake, ice cream, and fruit punch. And yet Brian Tomberlind is one of the three or four most fortunate youngsters in his homeroom, in that he has two parents who, despite the serious mistakes of their young years, have overcome their addictions: two parents who have stayed together and want Brian to have a better life than they have, and are working toward this goal—Penny by holding down a steady job and providing as many good times for him as she can, and Nathan by keeping him from such temptations as cheating and by trying to motivate him, sometimes by persuasion and sometimes by threats or punishment, to be a more diligent student. To Nathan, making Brian learn his multiplication tables is a symbol of the small victories that are possible in his world, and that are no less important for being small and thus perhaps attainable.

On a breezy Monday morning, Ms. Grant—an attractive fifty-three-year-old transplanted Californian, with a daughter who works as a lawyer in Pasadena—who is Brian's sixth-grade homeroom teacher and is also his reading and spelling teacher, greets her students as they arrive, with "Hi, honey" and "Hi, sweetie." She asks how their weekends went and where their homework assignments that were originally due on Friday are. Brian and a number of his classmates hand theirs in. Others make excuses: "My mother made me clean my whole room," "I had to take care of my little sister," "My mother said I didn't have to do all of it," "I don't got none."



"You don't got *none*?" Ms. Grant asks.

"I don't have any," the last kid says as Ms. Grant pencils check marks next to the names of the non-homework-doers on a piece of paper. The students know the rules: ten homework checks (or behavior checks) and they're ineligible to attend the Incentive Party held every other Friday for the virtuous. If they turn the homework in late, though, the checks will be erased. "The bottom line is I want them to do their work," Ms. Grant says.

"I can't believe a parent wouldn't let a child do his homework," Brian says, almost wistfully, in a low voice to a friend. Nathan has recently told Brian that he can no longer go out to play after school on Mondays ("He wants me to settle in after the weekend") or Wednesdays ("It's the night my parents go to aftercare and I go along and sit in the cafeteria watching TV and drawing while they're in meetings"). Less play equals more time for homework in general and math in particular.

At eight-forty-five, a student in the Glenview office asks the students over the intercom to please get ready for morning announcements. First, the students observe "a moment of silence," mandated by the State of Tennessee. During the silence, some crack their knuckles, some doze off. After they recite the Pledge of Allegiance, they chant the Glenview Attitude Pledge, fifteen inspirational lines ("I know I'm capable of success / I am a learner and I can achieve / It's in myself that I must believe") composed by Ralph M. Thompson, who has been the school's principal since the fall of 1992. Next comes the vocabulary word of the week (" 'lavish'—hard work can lead to a lavish life style"), and a few reminders ("Please bring your school-picture money to the cafeteria"). By eight-fifty-five, Ms. Grant has taken attendance, and she now asks her class to line up. The students move single file, in alphabetical order, along a hallway wall to their first Monday class—Computers.

Glenview's computer room has twenty-nine Packard Bell computers, but ten of them are in disrepair, so the kids usually "partner up." They are not proficient on the computers; like Brian, twenty-four of his classmates have no computers at home, and they attend Computer class only twice a week. Today, they are not going to use the computers, because their teacher believes they need help with capitalization more urgently. In a few weeks, they will be taking annual achievement tests that are part of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program—the TCAPs, the tests are called—and Glenview wants its students to perform well. In a booming voice, the computer teacher reminds the class emphatically that days of the week, months of the year, street addresses ("like Animal Lane"), and proper names begin with capital letters.

Tuesdays through Fridays, Brian has Math (all academic subjects are taught four times weekly), but on Monday his next period is Reading. Ms. Grant says she wants everyone to choose a subject for a research report on an African-American man or woman—"and forget Michael Jordan or Michael Jackson and any other figures from the world of sports or entertainment." She goes through the five steps of the report, which range from "brainstorming" to "bibliography." When Brian has trouble coming up with a subject, someone proposes Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American on the Supreme Court. He asks what the Supreme Court is. He has heard of President Clinton but doesn't know when he was elected or which political party he belongs to. He has no idea where Bosnia and Israel are.

The students' discipline is good in Reading. If Ms. Grant doesn't like something she notices—for example, a girl wearing a low-cut dress, exposing cleavage—she tells the student that she is in violation of Glenview's dress code. The girl goes to the school office without protest, borrows a T-shirt, and wears it over the offending dress the rest of the day. (Most of the girls in the class are tall, a few are overweight, all wear bras.) When Ms. Grant spots a boy chewing gum, she pronounces his name deliberately and says, "You need to spit the gum out." He complies. (The boys come in a wider range of sizes, from small and slight to tall and heavy.)

Ms. Grant, who also taught Brian in third grade, is his favorite teacher, and he considers her a friend. This February 14th, he spent all the money Nathan could afford to give him on a big Valentine's Day balloon for her. On Brian's birthday, she handed him five dollars and a card in a report-card envelope. Brian doesn't realize that she gives five dollars to each of her sixth graders on his or her birthday.

On Monday, Reading segues into DARE, which stands for Drug Abuse Re-

sistance Education, a nationwide program. It is taught by Officer Bumpas, a uniformed Metro Nashville police officer, packing gold jewelry and a .38-calibre revolver. One Monday, she leads the class—she addresses the children as "sir" and "ma'am"—in a discussion of the ways in which people are pressured by the advertising media. She mentions products that are endorsed by celebrities and moves on to those with snob appeal. A student cites an ad for Grey Poupon mustard. Brian loves commercials. He raises his hand and offers another example—a commercial for Viennetta ice cream. "It shows fancy people's hands, and the women wearing pearl bracelets," he says. "There's fancy plates on the table, like china. And crystal cups, like wineglasses. And silver—it looks real. I'd like to try the ice cream, but not for the snob appeal, just because it looks good." In the category of "Having Fun," the DARE workbook shows a boy on skis, with the caption "Have a beer." Officer Bumpas asks what the picture shows and what it fails to show. Brian's hand is air-bound again. "It shows that in order to have fun you have to have a beer," he says. "It doesn't show if you're up on a ski slope with a can of beer you wouldn't ski well. Beer would make you mess up more or make you slower. You'd be better off without it." It is not a coincidence that Brian is more vocal in DARE than in any other class.

The last morning class is Language. One Monday, the teacher struggles to teach prepositions; another Monday, she wages a losing battle to teach the difference between "can" and "may." The students don't pay attention, and start talking to one another.

"Is there any reason you're acting like this?" the teacher inquires of a girl who has been restyling another girl's hair.

"Yeah, because we're bored," the girl answers.

The lunchroom is noisy. Brian eats his corn dog and baked potato, drinks his milk and his orange juice ("Sometimes there's Jell-O, but today orange juice is the dessert"), and talks to two classmates about basketball.

In Social Studies, the class is studying the Renaissance. Brian and his classmates read that Leonardo da Vinci painted "The Last Supper," and Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel. Asked if learning about artists in sixteenth-century Italy has meaning for him, he says, "Knowing about the Renaissance makes me feel better, because it makes me feel smarter."

Science, Monday's last academic subject, has always been Brian's favorite. "I like making things and experimenting, and I collect rocks," he explains. The teacher distributes compasses, many of which don't point north. "I think some fifth graders stuck magnets in them and messed them up," Brian suggests.

From two-thirty to three o'clock every day, Brian's class goes to Physical Education. One Monday, the P.E. instructor, Mr. Majors, who is a former college football player, explains cardiovascular fitness. Brian excels at P.E. "In fifth grade, I won an award for being second-fittest in the whole school," he recalls. "We did pushups, pullups, situps, and we ran. I think I'm fit because I play a lot."

If Brian sees a fight on the way home, he avoids it. He has the gift of minding his own business—a useful gift for gliding through a Glenview day.

At the Tomberlinds' dining table in the afternoon, Brian's approach to homework is to dispose of it as quickly as possible. When his Spelling assignment entails putting thirty vocabulary words into sentences, he spells the vocabulary word correctly but is careless about the spelling of other words he uses in his made-up sentences. "That pieace of cake is 'irresistible,'" he prints. (He has trouble writing in cursive.) And "Jason allways has to 'complicate' things." He avoids thinking up ways to use difficult words in sentences, and often puts the vocabulary word into a simple question, as in "What does 'predominant' mean?" and "What does 'gallant' mean?" He says he sees no point in trying harder: "Ms. Grant just looks at the homework and if you've used the spelling words you get an A. If you haven't, you get an F."

Nathan doesn't check Brian's homework, but he takes out the multiplication flash cards and asks Brian what seven times eight is. Brian hesitates, then gives an incorrect answer. Though Nathan appears angry, he doesn't preach to Brian, as he often does. Nathan was supposed to have an interferon shot yesterday and postponed it until today. Now, still dreading its side effects, he goes into the bedroom and prepares to give himself the shot.

Later, father and son discuss the fact that Glenview permits corporal punishment. Penny and Nathan have given their consent for Brian to receive it, if necessary, but Mr. Thompson has cut way back on it—from more than two hundred paddlings to twenty in his first year as principal, and thereafter to below a dozen. Mr. Thompson sometimes prevails upon the parents to come to school and do the paddling, which is limited to two licks with a nine-inch-long oval wooden paddle, kept in the school office. Brian has never been paddled, but he is well informed about the ritual. "I've heard the screams from the principal's office," he says. "The kids are usually hollering before they get there. You have to bend over and put your hands on the desk. They hit you on the butt. One boy was paddled by Mr. Thompson, because his mama wouldn't do it. She tooken up for him even though her child needed correcting."

Eakin Elementary School is six miles—and a social universe—away from Glenview. It has seven hundred and nine children in grades from kindergarten through six and classrooms in two old brick buildings situated near Vanderbilt University. Real-estate ads attempt to attract homebuyers to the neighborhood with the words "Eakin school district," because Eakin is among the city's most sought-after public elementary schools. There aren't quite enough local children to fill it, so parents with educational ambitions for their children enter a lottery for the out-of-zone slots. Sixteen of the twenty-nine students in Mrs. Hyde's sixth-grade class at Eakin have attended Eakin since kindergarten, twenty since third grade.

Both schools offer friendly environments and employ highly regarded principals and teachers—Glenview's Ralph Thompson was selected Nashville's Principal of the Year for 1993-94, and an Eakin teacher was chosen Tennessee's Teacher of the Year for 1994-95. The schools are distinguished in part by their differences. Eakin is less racially diverse than Glenview (it is 24.9 per cent black), and it describes the parents of its students as "middle income," with only seventeen per cent of the students receiving free or reduced-price meals. There is no corporal punishment at Eakin, no moving from class to class or building to building in alphabetical lines. Discipline isn't a problem at Eakin. Twenty-two of Mrs. Hyde's twenty-nine sixth graders have home computers; most are knowledgeable about current world events; and a few are already talking about going to Ivy League colleges. By seventh grade, some will be attending private schools and others selective magnet schools. Only three of Glenview's seventy-five sixth graders will go to a magnet school.

Perhaps the most precise measurement of the socioeconomic advantages that Eakin's student body has over Glenview's shows up in the annual scores on the standard nationwide achievement tests, which are part of the TCAPs. In the spring of 1996, nine per cent of Eakin's sixth-grade students and twenty-eight per cent of Glenview's tested below average in Reading, Language, and Math (the national norm was twenty-three per cent); forty-seven per cent of Eakin's sixth graders and sixty-five per cent of Glenview's tested average (the national norm was fifty-four per cent); and forty-four per cent of Eakin's sixth graders and seven per cent of Glenview's tested above average in these skills (the national norm was twenty-three per cent).

"Thprinklth."

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When Brian Tomberlind was in kindergarten, most of his grades were satisfactory. A teacher commented on his report card in April, 1990, that he was still "a little unsure of his letters and some numbers," and urged, "Please work with him on this. He is a precious little boy." In first grade, when Brian first took TCAPs, he had mostly 4s and 5s in each skill the TCAPs tested, although in Science he scored a 9. (Scores in stanines 1 to 3 are below average, 4 to 6 average, 7 to 9 above average.) First grade is memorable to Brian "because I discovered there was no Santa Claus and I told all the other kids." In second grade, Brian's stanines, including Science, were mostly 4s and 5s. Toward the end of fifth grade, in April, 1995, his scores were all average except in Language (top of the third stanine) and Reading (bottom of the seventh). A sentence at the bottom of Brian's Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program report in 1995 states, "The student's total battery score is better than about fifty-three per cent of the national sample, and falls in the average range." This spring, he scored better than sixty-six per cent of the national sample—still in the average range.

There are two children in Brian's homeroom who test above average and may therefore have a chance to overcome their disadvantaged situations and compete with the more privileged Eakin students. One is a first-generation Vietnamese boy with a gift for math and a cultural heritage of striving for academic success. The other is a black girl who loves to read. "I read after school, I read to the kids I babysit, and I read at night," she says. "My mother's worried about the electric, so I read in bed with just a night-light until eleven o'clock—my bedtime on school nights. My mother stays up until she sees my light go off. Weekends and summers, I can read as late as I want. I'm going to go to Vanderbilt."

While Brian isn't keen on reading, and his math TCAPs, in the thirty-ninth percentile, are subpar, Mr. Thompson thinks he has a number of qualities that will enable him to succeed—with or without a college education. "Most of our kids are in bad situations none of them are responsible for, and they show it," Mr. Thompson says. "Brian senses a lot of love from his father, his mother, and his grandmother. He's a consistent and a resilient child, and he knows how to insulate himself from disappointments. He's a survivor, and he's got character. Conventional wisdom has it that this generation isn't going to do as well as its parents. Brian is going to be an exception."

Asked if he expects to finish high school, Brian says "Yes," with calm but firm conviction. And what about college? "It's a long time off. But I would like to go to art school."

A CONVERSATION with Brian on a recent Friday afternoon in the Tomberlinds' living room:

"Brian, do you know what bad words are?"

"Yes. My parents use them around the house, but they told me not to."

"Are you interested in girls?"

"Yes." He turns deep red.

"In girls you see on TV?"

"Mostly in girls I know. I took one girl to the movies when I was in third grade. Me and her sat in the front of the theatre, my parents sat in back. Last year, I took

"Oh, by all means, James—claim the moral high ground."

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another girl to a roller rink, but I stopped asking girls on dates, because I'm shy."

"Do you like to talk on the phone?"

"No. It makes me tired. It makes my ear hot. Maybe I'm not used to it. We got our first phone maybe three years ago."

"Where would you like to travel?"

"To Florida to see the Pacific Ocean."

"What effect has your father's illness had on you?"

"We don't do a lot, because he don't feel like it. And I worry he'll have to go to a hospital."

"What do you like to watch on TV?"

"Reruns of 'Seinfeld' and 'Home Improvement' with Mama when she gets home, and 'Roseanne,' 'Martin,' and 'America's Funniest Home Videos.' Sports."

"How do you feel about black people?"

"Same as I do about white people. There's some good and some bad."

"Who are some of the good black people you know?"

"My friend Jonathan across the street, lots of boys in my class, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Grant, Mr. Majors, and Officer Bumpas."

"What makes you happy?"

"When someone says nice things about me. When I get finished with my homework. When we go somewhere."

"What makes you unhappy?"

"When I can't go outside, but I'm not too unhappy, because I know it's not going to help me."

"How do you like being twelve?"

"I like it. I'm older. It's better than being eleven. You're taller. You can ride the go-carts at Snookers, out at Hickory Hollow Mall. At first when I got older and taller I didn't like not being able to play on the bars at Chuck E. Cheese no more."

"Are you looking forward to being thirteen?"

"Yes. I'll be a teen-ager."

"Will your life be better as you get older?"

"Yes. I'm going to work at Value Plus. I think you have to be fourteen or fifteen. I'll have money, and I could get more things that I want."

"What things are you having trouble getting right now?"

"A go-cart, but they cost between six and seven hundred dollars, and my mama still ain't paid Nana back the two hundred and forty dollars she put on her credit card for my bike. And an N.B.A. Jam game for the Super Nintendo that Sam gave me one Christmas. I only have two games for it—Super Mario World and Super Mario All-Stars."

"Will your life be better than your parents' lives?"

"I think so, because I'm never going to drink or do drugs. It's dumb. I seen what they done to my parents and most of my grandparents."

"Are you worried about the future?"

"Not really, because I'm going to go to art school and be an artist, and I hope I get to do it."

PENNY, who has been fixing tacos for supper, has heard part of the conversation. "Nobody ever says they *want* to grow up to be a drug addict," she puts in. "I wanted to take care of mentally retarded people. I love my job, but my first two years there I didn't know how to use the machines right and I had two carpal-tunnel operations. It's so important for me to have Brian graduate from high school. Me and all six of my siblings dropped out. Brian's said he wants to be an artist since he was three and a half and done drawings and took them to his grandfather and said, 'Pay me.' But he needs something to fall back on. He'll find his way. There's decent jobs for good people with high-school diplomas. Brian's Nana graduated high school, and she's earning eleven dollars and twenty-one cents as a security officer on the two-to-ten shift. That's good money for a woman in Nashville. I'm going to get the mortgage on this house paid off and give the house to Brian and his wife. I have a 401K savings plan. I let the company hold back three per cent of my pay—that's nine dollars a week. The company puts in twenty-five cents for every dollar I save. The man who explained the plan to us said the money would be reinvested and would grow to fifty-seven thousand dollars before I retire."

Nathan, who is smoking a cigarette after taking a shower, has also been listening. "I ain't never had no goals at twelve, but I didn't think of sitting around A.A. meetings," he says. "Roofing was O.K. but not steady. One job finishes, you got to find you another one. I don't want Brian to do that—Lord, no. I want him to be where he's warm in winter and cool in summer. I have dreams for Brian to get the best education he could—maybe, if he wanted, to go to college. I think there's better-paying jobs if a man can use his head instead of his physical strength."

After dinner, Brian is at the cleared-off dining table. He has paper, colored pencils, and the latest issue of the magazine *Lowrider* in front of him. He is looking at a drawing of a '47 Chevy and drawing his own version of it—on a slightly smaller scale and with tires that are square rather than round. "I guess my car has flat tires," he says.

Nathan is watching a video, and Brian goes into his room. It is furnished with a double-decker bed (Brian sleeps in the lower bunk and uses both mattresses on it, to make it more comfortable), a chest of drawers, a glass coffee table (its surface is cluttered with "my stuff"), a small TV, a stereo, and a radio. The room has a wide closet and a narrow window that faces a dog pen (occupied by the family dog until it got out and disappeared in February).

In April, Nathan stops giving himself interferon shots; his doctor agrees that they have not put the hepatitis C in remission. He doesn't regain any of the twenty pounds he has lost, but the chills and fever caused by the drug diminish, and his face is less pallid. He begins to receive monthly disability benefits, for which he filed in 1995, and which cover the family's phone and utility bills.

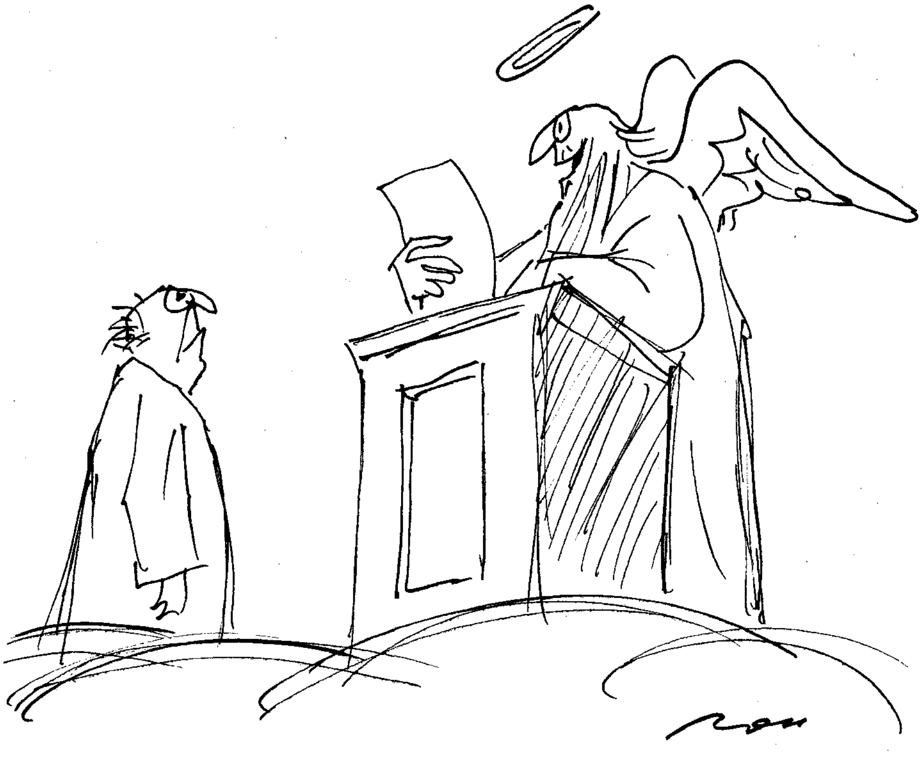
In the spring, Nathan no longer drives Penny to work and Brian to school—some mornings he can't get out of bed in time—but when he feels up to it he starts tilling a garden, goes fishing, or does some cooking. On Good Friday, he fixes a ham, and the day after he cooks "white beans with a bunch of ham and garlic in it." For Easter, he gives Penny money. "I bought me some underthings," she says. Penny's last clothing purchase, in late February, had been "three T-shirts, brand-new, and two pairs of jogging pants, at Goodwill, for a dollar eleven each." Penny grew up hard, with a father who worked, drank, and "tried to give us kids something for Christmas, even if it was only a piece of fruit." Penny is caring and likable—qualities that Brian has inherited. When money is tight, Penny does without and doesn't complain, and when there is a little extra she is grateful for it, as Brian is, too. In late March, an acquaintance of Nathan's gives Nathan and Brian some scrap aluminum, which Penny and Nathan sell at a recycling place for thirty dollars. Nathan and Brian give Penny the money for her birthday. She buys a pair of black Lycra bicycle shorts and a black T-shirt with Garfield the cat on it, at Wal-Mart. Brian earns twenty additional dollars doing jobs for Sam, the remodeller for whom Nathan used to work. Penny drives Brian to a flea market—Brian loves flea markets. He buys Nathan a lighter on a key chain for two dollars. "I hate it when Dad smokes, but he's always losing his," he says. He spends ten dollars panning for gold flakes and gems. "I really like to go panning, and this time I came up with a cut gem, black with a little orange on it, that's ready to be mounted on a ring for Mama," he says.

In May, Sam goes out of town for a week and offers the Tomberlinds the use of his houseboat. Nathan takes Brian out of school for two days, and Penny joins them on the weekend. Nathan nags him about his multiplication tables, but Brian studies them only halfheartedly. On May 30th, after Glenview's last full day of school, Penny tests Brian on his multiplication tables. She looks at the answers on the reverse side of her flash cards; her multiplication is iffier than Nathan's, and she is embarrassed that her ability to read is so limited. Brian gets most of the answers right. "I ain't as nervous around my mama," he says.

On May 31st, there is school from 8:45 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. One boy's mother fetches him at ten-thirty, and he waves goodbye. His classmates say nothing. At eleven-thirty, Ms. Grant wishes her sixth graders a good summer and asks them to visit her classroom next year. They leave nonchalantly.

Nana fetches Brian, and they go out to eat at a Po Folks. Nathan has been napping at his mother's, and they bring him back the hamburger he requested. He eats it, and she leaves for work. The television set is on, and Nathan is watching a science program. "What's seven times nine?" Nathan asks Brian as the show ends and a "Columbo" rerun begins. "Seven times nine is . . ." It is obvious that Brian is stalling for time, but time doesn't buy him the correct answer. "Go sharpen a pencil and write down your times tables," Nathan says.

Brian goes to the kitchen and starts opening drawers, in search of a knife.



"Ah, yes—Mr. Blenheim, and his obnoxious car alarm."

Nathan thinks that he is taking too long—that he is watching "Columbo" instead of searching with due diligence—and slaps Brian hard and noisily on the leg. "Next time, it will be with a belt, Brian," he says. Brian is sobbing. Nathan flies into a rage. "You didn't sharpen the pencil fast enough! I saw you looking at the TV! You can con your mother, but you can't con me!" he shouts.

Brian answers that he wasn't watching TV and he had trouble finding the right knife.

Back talk angers Nathan. "I've asked you your multiplication tables for the last few months," he says, and he continues firing words at his son: "You know the consequences. I'm tired of talking. I'm tired of being so patient with you. I'm tired of your crying all the time. You just talk, you don't take no action. I'm tired of your bluff. You won't go outside and play." He sends Brian, still sobbing, off to a bedroom to write the multiplication tables.

"I'm tired of Brian's bullcrap," Nathan says. "I don't think he takes me seriously. It hurts me when I hurt him. I hurt my left hand with my thumb."

Asked if he'll hit Brian with his right hand next time, Nathan answers, "Yes." Asked if he doesn't think he hit Brian a little too hard, Nathan says, "A whipping never killed me. I think kids take advantage of their parents, just like I did. They take your kindness and your generosity for weakness." And the appropriateness of slapping Brian on the last day of school? "The timing was just the way it was supposed to be. As far as I'm concerned, he's out of sixth grade and started the seventh today. Seventh and eighth grades are important years, and rough ones. Brian has to settle down and do his work hisself. The teachers won't have the time to work with him. My dad didn't care. He was only around a little when I started seventh grade. That's when my grades went down and I started getting high. I don't want Brian turning out like me. When Brian gets eighteen, it's his choice, but he's going to mind me as long as he lives with me. Brian may convince my mama or Penny that he's not capable of learning his multiplication tables, but I think he's very capable of learning them."

Asked if the only important thing in life is that eight times nine is seventy-two, Nathan, who is half-watching "Columbo" and is calming down, says, "It's hard being a parent."

Half an hour passes.

"Brian," Nathan calls to his son.

"What?" Brian asks, emerging from the bedroom with several pieces of paper, on which he has printed the multiplication tables more neatly than ever before.

"Brian, did I hurt your leg?"

"No."

"Did I hurt your feelings?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to ask you those multiplication tables on Monday, and if you don't know them you'll stay indoors all summer."

Brian nods.

On Friday, at 4:30 P.M., Nathan and Brian pick up Penny at work, stop briefly at a drive-in bank where she cashes her weekly paycheck—her take-home pay is two hundred and eighty dollars—and drive quickly downtown. Nashville's annual four-day Summer Lights festival started Thursday, and the Tomberlinds, Nathan included, all wanted to go. They have a nice time listening to bands, watching street performers, and eating corn dogs, roast corn on the cob, fried peppers, and sausages. Brian goes from Penny to Nathan and back easily. He is not afraid of Nathan. They get home around eleven o'clock. Brian, who is double-jointed, does marvellous acrobatic stunts on the living-room floor. All three Tomberlinds enjoy his performance. "We often have good times with each other," Penny says. "We've learned how to argue less."

On Saturday morning, after going fishing, Nathan says, "I should have counted to ten and cooled off a little bit before I hit Brian yesterday. But on Monday if he doesn't know the multiplication tables he's going to stay indoors all summer."

On Monday morning, Nathan drives Penny to work and fixes breakfast for Brian—lots of pancakes and crisp bacon. "O.K., Bubba," he says as they wolf down the meal. "What's seven times nine?"

"Seven times nine is sixty-three," Brian says, with conviction.

"And six times eight?"

"Forty-eight."

"What's nine times nine?"

"Eighty-one."

Victorious, Nathan hugs Brian. Victorious, Brian goes outside to play. ◆

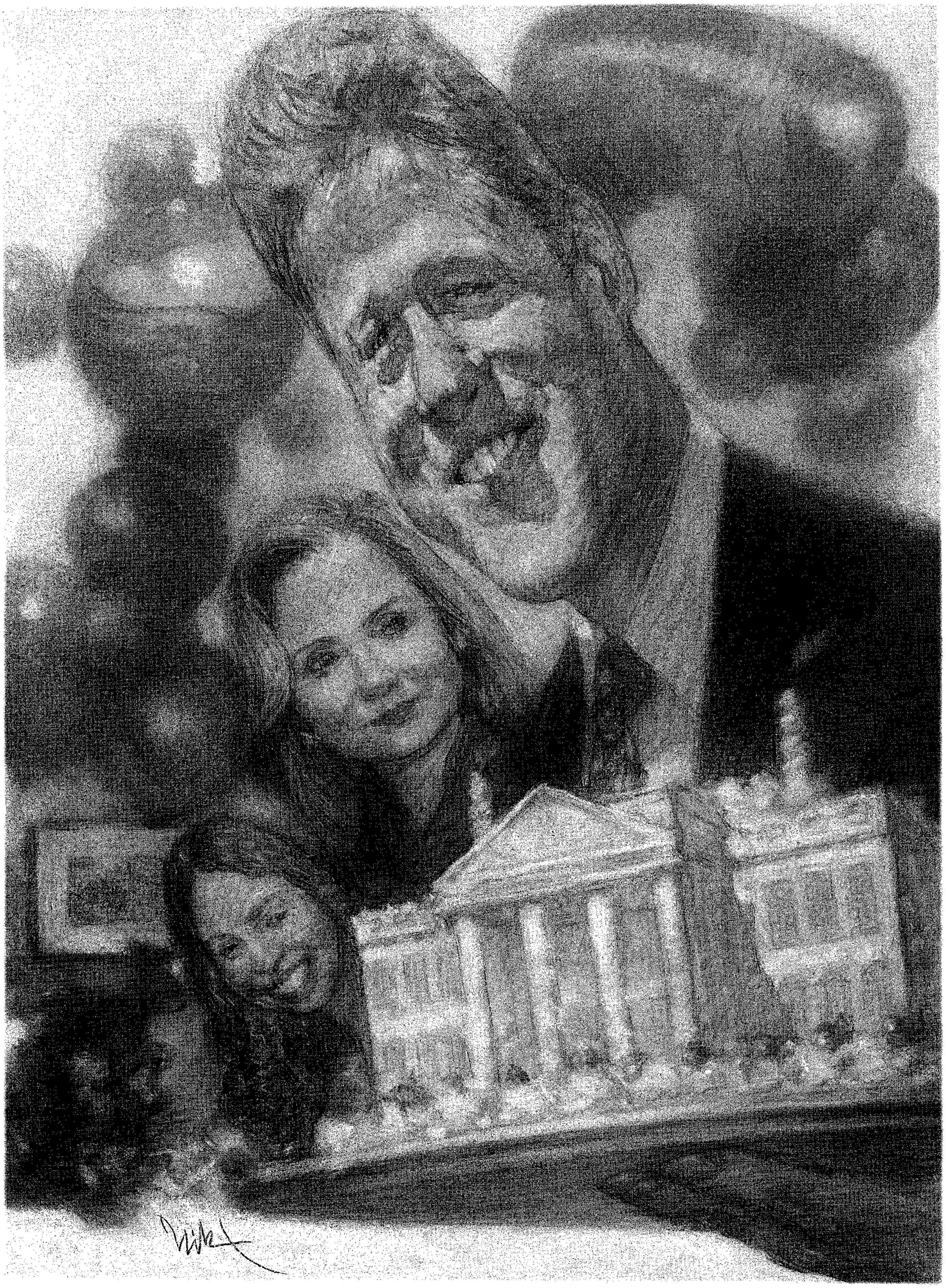
SKETCHBOOK BY CARLOS NINE

GOOD OLD BOY

FIFTY? Bill Clinton is fifty years old? It seems unlikely, but it is true, or it will be on August 19th. The first baby-boomer President will join the ranks of the first boomers to cross into the category of old age. He will be eligible to join the American Association of Retired Persons. (He will not, though, receive an invitation to it in his morning mail—a memento mori by mass marketing which brings dubious pleasure to multitudes of new demicentenarians each year—for the A.A.R.P. does not mail invitations to government buildings, of which the White House is one.) He will be entitled to senior citizens' discounts. After a lifetime as a white male, he will at last join a recognized victim group: like millions of others, he will be subject to the prejudices of ageism. In short, the President will be an old man.

This is odd, because he is so quintessentially a young man, so full of promise, appetite, charm, and himself. His winning qualities (his great energy, his many enthusiasms, his curiosity, his open-mindedness) are a young man's qualities, and his other qualities (his disorder, his short attention span, his trouble with his temper, his confidence that he can always talk his way out of a jam) belong to a young man, too. He has been conspicuously a young person's President. He plays the saxophone. He told MTV what sort of underwear he favors. He wears shorts in public. He eats like a teen-ager. Looking at him on television, you can still see in him the chubby kid in bluejeans, the earnest and eager adolescent shaking John F. Kennedy's hand in the Rose Garden, the boyish charmer of Oxford and Yale. It is true that he has graying hair, but on top of his mobile and still mostly unlined face it appears to be a not very good fake, like the silvery powder used to dusty up the hair of the lead in a high-school production of "Lear." It's a paradox of style. Michael Kinsley once wrote that Al Gore was an old person's idea of a young person; Bill Clinton is a young person's idea of an old person.

—MICHAEL KELLY

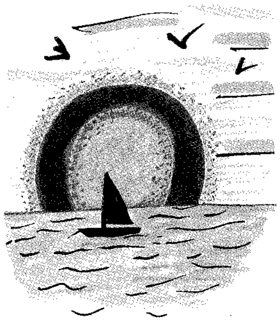


FICTION

ETHICS

Temptations of a summer night.

BY PETER J. SMITH



OUR house was always filled with teachers. It's late at night, and they're standing in the open doorway, with one arm half up a sleeve. They're squatting on the outside stoop, under a bug-speckled porch light, curling their car keys over and under the length of their hands, like a magic trick. Or wondering, with a faintly apologetic shift of the eyebrows, if my brother or I, licensed or not, would mind giving them a lift back to the dorm? They've all had too much to drink. The older teachers, who, like my father, found themselves at loose ends after the Second World War and fell into teaching jobs that lasted for a lifetime, call Tom, my older brother, and me “old man” or, with laborious formality, “sir,” as in “yousir!,” their handshakes swiftly sincere. The wives—they're not teachers themselves, though mock jobs have sometimes been created for them around school—kiss us on the cheek and tell us that they love us.

TOM was annoyed to find out that Miss Hand was coming to stay with us over Memorial Day weekend. At seventeen, he was three years older than I, with a dark complexion and a sloping, roughened aspect to his face that reminded me of an arrowhead. “She's my *teacher*,” he kept saying to my mother. “How would you like it if I invited one of *your* teachers to come and torture you?”

“She's lonely.” My mother poked the hose around a heating grate as the Electrolux trampled tiredly behind her, making rude, sudden squeals as it rounded corners. “She has nowhere to go. She doesn't know anybody. Besides, it'll be your father's birthday, and it's fun having people—”

“She's my teacher,” he repeated carefully.

“*Was* your teacher, yes. The year's practically over. You're a senior.”

Susan Hand, Tom's photography teacher, was due to arrive that Friday afternoon on the four-thirteen ferry. It was the end of her first year teaching, and since she wasn't going to be returning to school in the fall my parents had invited her to spend the long holiday weekend with us at our summer house, about two hours from school. According to my mother, she'd come East following the failure of a love affair. “Poor thing,” my mother said now. “She's had a rough time of it. Whoever the man was, he really did a number on her.”

“Whose fault was it?” Tom wanted to know.

“Whose fault was what?” She'd turned off the vacuum, and had proceeded over to the windows that overlooked the water, which she was now busy polishing with a dish towel.

“Who caused her love affair to go bad? Who was it with, anyway?”

“Sometimes it's not anybody's fault. Sometimes people grow apart. Or they weren't good for each other in the first place. Their timing was off.”

“I'll bet it was her fault,” Tom said, with inexplicable contempt.

Along with Miss Hand, the other guests expected that weekend were Mr. and Mrs. Noerdlinger, who were old friends of our parents. Mr. Noerdlinger and my father had known each other for almost forty years, since the time they were roommates together at Harvard; my father had managed the tennis team the year Mr. Noerdlinger almost won the Heisman Trophy for the best college football player in the nation, a distinction practically unheard of for an Ivy Leaguer. He was the headmaster of the school where my father taught and also a part-time teacher. He led a senior-class seminar known as Ethics, in which students sat around in groups of four, discussing whether or not Harry Truman should have dropped the bomb on Hiroshima or whether marijuana should be legalized. At six-four, he dwarfed my father. He was hale and hearty, accustomed to greeting and reassuring trustees, parents, alumni, and donors. His smile was frequent and, I felt, insincere. His given name was Montgomery, though practically everyone knew him by his nickname, which was Bump.

His wife, Hope, was a fastidious, literal-minded woman whose weight was different every time you saw her. She came from an illustrious East Coast family whose name people associated with government and scandal. Because of her money, and perhaps because their only child, a son, had died in a hiking accident fifteen years earlier, people seemed frightened of her. “She's a sad woman,” my mother told me once.

“Sad?” I said.

“Money brings its own set of problems.”

“Yeah, like, what shall I *buy*—”

“No, like—” and although I hoped she would explain herself, she only added, “Everybody has problems, John, and Hope has more than most.”

WHEN we drove to the ferry landing to meet Miss Hand, the sun was blazing overhead, the roads were empty and exposed, and the street tar was a rich, glittering, doughy black.

“Maybe Miss Hand won't like it here and she'll turn around and go home. Wouldn't that be too bad,” Tom said from the front seat. “Maybe she fell over the side and drowned. Third-rate photography teacher overboard! Stop that ferry!”

Knowing how he felt about her spending the weekend with us, I was surprised that he had bothered to come along.

“So've you decided what you want for your birthday?” I said to the back of my father's head as we pulled into the ferry landing.

“A smile from my children.”

“No, come on, really.”

Every year he said the same thing, or something like it: “A smile from my children.” “A-plusses, not A-minuses.” “Silence around the house.”

“For real,” Tom said now.

FILIP PAGOWSKI

"A little Christian charity."

"No! Real things," I said impatiently.

"As opposed to what? Fraudulent things?"

With a gentle widening of his eyes, my father lifted his hands in anticipation of the peculiar, and slightly sinister, finger-curling motion he sometimes performed at the conclusion of a trip, to test the dexterity of his joints. "I don't," he said, "want any more *things*."

As we pulled into the ferry lot, I saw Miss Hand confidently descending the ferry planks. "Oh," Tom said. "She didn't drown. Shit."

My father bounded out to greet her, and then Miss Hand climbed into the car beside him, and with mock gravity reached to the back seat to shake hands, first with Tom and then with me.

"I brought along my bathing suit," she said to my brother. "What's the water like?"

"Oh, it's not bad," he replied, suddenly shy.

Everything about Miss Hand was a surprise: her jeans, her dirty white Saucony sneakers, her cigarette, her cantaloupe-green shirt, and the casual, confident way she tossed her duffel into the trunk. She was pretty, I decided, once you got her outside school.

In the car, she turned to face my father. This was a treat, she said; she'd always wanted to visit the island. "And I've heard so many things about your house."

"Don't believe them," I interrupted eagerly. "It's a falling-down piece of junk." I glanced over at Tom, but he'd sunk into a puzzled, turbulent silence.

Ten minutes later, we stopped. My father killed the motor and sat back, appraising the property. "Here we all be." He motioned for me to collect Miss Hand's bag. "We thought we'd put you out on the porch," he went on. "There's a hammock there. And you don't mind using an outhouse—"

I was surprised that the cars habitually parked in the driveway—an aged truck, a Falcon with its convertible top sheared off, a woods-green VW bug—were nowhere to be seen. Otherwise, the house looked the same: a boxcar-shaped split-level on a quarter acre of frumpy-looking top marsh. In the twilight, the overgrown grass looked almost black. An upholstered car seat that someone had dragged out onto the lawn served as a sun mat, and beside the hedge, under a clothesline, was a grouping of old, split cobblestones, the foundations of something imagined but never built.

Tom, who hadn't bothered to get out of the car, looked bored and impatient. "Can we please get going," he said to nobody in particular.

But Father persisted. "You don't mind roughing it?" he called across the lawn. "You girls from California aren't afraid of Indians and boa constrictors, are you?"

Miss Hand stared back at him. "No." She was making her way across the lawn now, and she must have sensed, at some point, that we weren't following her, because just before she reached the front steps she turned around with a hesitant, questioning look on her face.

I couldn't stand it. "We're just kidding!" I howled. "We don't live here!"

It wasn't our house. It belonged to some neighbors we didn't know, who were never at home, and it was considered the local eyesore.

My father was laughing. "Had you going, didn't we?"

It was a trick he liked to play on people who'd never visited us before, and he'd been playing it for as long as I could remember. It was designed to evaluate a guest's ability to conceal disappointment, and it made our actual house, which was only a mile farther down the road, seem palatial by comparison. Young women were the best game, and my father knew it.

THE inside of the house was cool and cedary; the arrival of guests—even the anticipation of them—had transformed our mood, and the rooms seemed filled, almost rearranged, with the sharp, ravenous textures of strangers. The sight of unfamiliar objects—the dainty, powder-blue lining of an open suitcase on the couch, sneakers with yellowing Velcro straps instead of laces, a slack handbag that wasn't my mother's—made me excited and apprehensive.

Miss Hand was given the room in the back of the house, and I moved for the weekend into Tom's makeshift bedroom, off the laundry room in the basement, where he'd insisted on moving that winter after he'd caught me nosing through his file cabinets. My mother, assuming, I think, that Hope was accustomed to luxury, had given the Noerdlingers the third floor, which consisted of a separate apartment, with a kitchen and a balcony.

Before dinner, my mother suggested that Tom give Miss Hand a tour of our property. When they came back into view an hour later in the fragrant, darkening light, both of them had wet hair, and Tom was holding his balled-up shirt in his hands.

Miss Hand was giggling. "I think they're horrible. *Ugh.*"

"No, they're not," Tom said without conviction. "Plus, they're useful. They're using horseshoe-crab blood to cure cancer or something."

The salt water had rimmed Miss Hand's eyes red, and she rubbed at them pleasantly, like a child just waking up.

"Oh, come on, you can't love them. It's *impossible*," she said.

"Well, I do," and then he was laughing, too.

Soon my father was pouring drinks, and then my mother called us to the table. In the middle of dinner, Mr. Noerdlinger posed a question: if an intruder broke into your house in the middle of the night, and you happened to have a pistol underneath your pillow, would you feel entitled to take his life?

"It depends on whether he looks like Clark Gable," my mother replied instantly. "Does he?"

"For you—" Mr. Noerdlinger said, putting his arm around my mother's bare shoulder, "he looks like Gable."

"Well, in that case then, I don't shoot."

My mother looked stunning that night, with her shoulder-length blond hair tucked behind her ears, and her cerulean wraparound dress low on her shoulders. Her tan made it seem as though her entire body were in shadow. Next to her—they were seated knee to knee—Mrs. Noerdlinger was no contest. The idea of her money, which insulated her ordinarily, and lent her the suggestion of uninhabited choice and freedom, seemed to weigh against her. She seemed coarse, finicky, cloistered.

"Is this one of your Ethics questions?" Tom said politely. When Mr. Noerdlinger said it was, he put his head in his hands and pretended to think. "I'd kill him," he said finally, though this time no one laughed. "No, actually," he went on, after a small silence, "I wouldn't kill him."

"Even if they were going to kill you?" Miss Hand said. "I certainly would."

"I'd bargain with him," my mother said. She'd come forward slightly in her chair, her face cocked, her fingers splayed under her chin, an enraptured student. "I'd tell him he could have whatever he wanted. Gold, silver, jewelry. Not that I have any jewelry to speak of—"

"You can't do that," Tom said. "You have to follow the rules."

"Oh, following the rules is *boring*." The glance she gave him was swift and pitying. How had she ended up with such stodgy children? "If a girl follows the rules, she might as well be in an old-folks' home. Right, everybody?" And she let out a low, dark, thrilling laugh.

On Saturday morning, I woke up early and decided to go for a swim. Retrieving a beach towel from the hall closet, I started down the path to the beach, and as I rounded the corner to the shore I glimpsed another swimmer in the water who, upon closer inspection, turned out to be Mr. Noerdlinger.

He was standing fifty feet out in the shallow water, and he appeared to be gazing, as if transfixed, at something—a seagull, a boat, maybe just the phenomenon of distance. As I got closer, I saw that he was naked. The morning light gave the shallow tide a sultry, faintly reddish cast. The water reached up only to his calves, which were as hairless as two pipes. He dipped both hands into the water and began rubbing his body distractedly: first his chest and then his abdomen, then the hair bearding his crotch, and up under his armpits. Then he swished his hands in the water, rinsing them. His slackly muscled bull's thighs seemed to tighten and expand as he ventured farther out into the channel, and as I looked on he seemed to freeze. A second later, with both hands on his hips, he urinated a stream six feet onto the water. Then, as if halfheartedly remembering a teen-aged diving maneuver, he wishboned both arms over his head, plowed underwater, and then resurfaced for breath thirty yards on beside the rudder of a boat.

My mother was in the kitchen, making coffee, when I came back into the house. "How is it down there?" she asked.

"I didn't go in," I said. "Mr. Noerdlinger's swimming."

She didn't turn around. "Well, so? Can't two people go in at the same time? Or is that against your private rules?"

"He's not wearing any clothes," I said. "I think he's taking a bath or something."

She began laying out forks and spoons and mugs. "How refreshing." She faced me with a slight smile. "Will you see who wants coffee?"

The sight of Mr. Noerdlinger in the water had unnerved me. When he returned from the beach, his virility seemed to threaten the house. He strode into the dining room with a white towel clenched around his thick waist, his nipples shaking slightly as he walked, just as he'd marched into our view, the bay water, and pissed into it, appropriating it for himself. He was too big for our house, and his aggression made the decorations in the room—the portraits of old aunts and uncles, the leaning plates, the little wood-and-glass knickknacks that my mother liked to collect—look sentimental and fussy.

At lunch, the adults were discussing what makes a good teacher. "He's a disciplinarian," Mr. Noerdlinger said. He rapped his pipe on the edge of the table, and with his other hand snaked an almond into his mouth. "A limits-setter. He's consistent as hell, and he doesn't take any guff."

"My class didn't really work out this term," Miss Hand said, though she didn't sound angry. "*Our* class, Tom," she added, directing her conversation to the doorway, where he was standing. "It wasn't a bad class, it just didn't work for whatever reason."

"Could be because you're new this year," Mr. Noerdlinger said. He turned his pipe over in his hand. "Could be because you're female."

"Tom would know," my mother said.

Miss Hand turned to him. "Well, O.K., so why do *you* think it wasn't all that great?"

"I thought it went O.K.," he said innocently. His eyes showed no indication that he thought otherwise, though I knew he didn't think much of Miss Hand as a teacher.

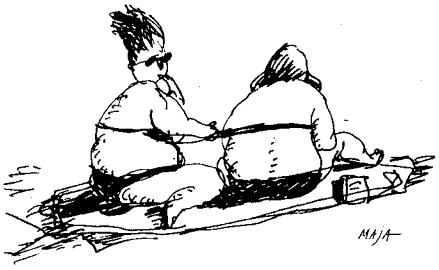
"What about the fact that she's a woman?" Mr. Noerdlinger said.

"No. Well, of *course* it had something to do with that. She is one." Tom's voice was irritable. "You *are* one," he said to Miss Hand.

Miss Hand gazed back at him humorously. "Right, and you're a man. So?"

"Boy," Tom corrected. "Whatever."

They were embarrassing him; there was no end in sight. "So, as a representative of your *gender*," Miss Hand went on, "what's it like for you to have a teacher who's a woman? Do you treat her any differently than you would a man? I certainly know what it's like having fifteen boys in a class."



"A madhouse," my mother said faintly. "Hormonally speaking."

"I just don't think boys at a certain age respect women," Miss Hand went on. "Or understand them." She must have realized how demure this sounded, because she added, "Well, why in the world should they, they're teen-agers."

"I respect women," Tom said. "Sort of." He added, "Just kidding. No, I do," he went on, more strongly, "actually."

Miss Hand said, "Well, you certainly go out with enough of them." As Tom stared at her, she said, "I've seen him fix girls with those eyes of his and they just *melt*."

Tom, glancing down, pleased, shook his head in confusion. Was a teacher supposed to notice a student's eyes?

"I think a good teacher is someone the students like," Mrs. Noerdlinger interjected.

"Nobody teaches you how to be a good teacher," my father said. "Or a good anything."

At three o'clock the next day we gathered on the front lawn. Tom and I were both wearing our Jams—thigh-long bathing trunks with yellow and mint dope-leaf graphics that floated down past the bones of our knees, and flooded out, bubbling, like skirts, in waist-deep water. "Where's Daddy-O?" my mother said to me. "Where's your father?"

Nobody knew. She hollered his name several times, but there was no answer inside the house, just some old jazz drifting from the turntable. The smell of honeysuckle filled the lawn with a close, intricate staleness. Everything—the marsh, the unmoving water, the distant halyards making their tink-tink-tink sound—seemed inert, slowed-down.

"For some reason, I don't think Dad's really *into* his birthday," Tom said.

"Oh really?" I said. "What makes you think that?"

"Put some shoes on before we head down to the beach, John," my mother ordered. "It's soaking wet down there."

Then she sent me into the house to find my father, and I found him in his room, lying on the bed, in an undershirt

FORGOT TO PHRASE "FINAL JEOPARDY" ANSWER IN FORM OF QUESTION.
Buck Brown

and boxer shorts, his watch and glasses gleaming on the bedside. As I stood over him, his white lids snapped open. "Uncle Sam wants *you*," I said.

When he finally appeared outside a few minutes later, he was frowning. There were dark sacks under his eyes, and his lips were sourly set. "What is this?" he murmured, annoyed. He was carrying his book with him. He stared at my mother, and I could tell that he was holding his tongue only because we were there, and there were guests, too.

"O.K., everybody," my mother said. "One, two, three . . ."

"Happy birthday!" we all yelled, and then sang it, off-key. When it was over, we applauded politely.

My mother handed my father the spool of string. "Come on." She was all business now. "You get to do it, too. You know the drill."

On our birthdays, she woke up early to make a labyrinth of kite string, tying it in loops and angles that led high and low through the house and ended in a knot around your big present. Tom was downplaying its importance. "The whole thing's kind of inane," Tom explained to Miss Hand. "We humor my mother, though. . . ."

"Follow the string," my mother kept saying. She was in the lead, on the path down into the marsh, my father fifteen feet behind her. There was a fineness to the mist, and fog was starting to come in, transparently light. We followed behind—Tom, then me, and then the guests coming up in the rear.

My father seemed to want to get this over with as soon as possible. Tangles of string laced across and under the marsh bushes, snagging the roots, yet rather than carefully unravelling them he tugged at them, and branches snapped off. Several of them dragged along behind him, unsmoothly, like tin cans trailing an old car. At one point, he turned to shake the knotted string from the raised oarlock of a dinghy, and when it wouldn't give, he went ahead without it.

Our birthday present to our father was a sixteen-foot fibreglass sloop. My mother had bought it at a marina in town, but all of us had chipped in, and the night before we'd signed our names with a flourish to a card that Tom Scotch-taped to the bottom of the mast. At that time, we had no boats. The Boston Whaler had been sold last summer; another boat, a Chris-Craft that my father had bought twenty years earlier, was now a flower-and-herb garden, an eyesore, its motor stripped and sold.

My mother was still in the lead, tanned feet in blue sneakers, her blond hair flying, bangs damp. Tom and I caught up with our father, and then overtook him: wouldn't he please hurry?

Then we were on the beach, Miss Hand and the Noerdlingers behind us. Ahead of us, the blue boat stood in the high black water, and there was the end of the string knotted tightly around the base of the mainsail.

"Happy birthday!" we all shouted.

"Happy birthday," my mother said, a little helplessly, and began to explain.

"The kids helped pick it out." This wasn't altogether true, though it just might help her case.

My father said, "For Christ's sakes." His arms hung by his sides, the tips of his fingers twitching.

"So do you like it?" I asked. Tom glared at me.

Mrs. Noerdlinger had taken a seat on the stern of an overtipped boat, though Mr. Noerdlinger remained standing, expectantly. Suddenly, despite Miss Hand on the other side of me and Tom staring down into the sand, there was nobody on the beach but my mother and father. This was between them. They faced each other without speaking, and my mother was the first to break, if biting down on her lip and looking down could be considered breaking. When my father, staring at my mother, said, in a foul, precise voice, "*I don't want any more things*," I couldn't stand to look at either one of them.

My mother wouldn't be beaten. Not in front of all of us, not in front of her house guests. "This isn't a *thing*," she said. "It's a *boat*. And it's not just for you either, it's for all of us."

This time his words were spaced, absolute, shunning. He repeated what he'd said: "*I don't want any more things*."

He turned his back to us and proceeded wordlessly past the Noerdlingers, back toward the start of the path, and my mother called out suddenly, "Bump! Tell him he'll love it!"

Mr. Noerdlinger, cornered, stayed silent.

My mother smoothed her hair, and began doing something with the rope, and I thought I could see her wince. "I can't believe he did that," she said to the Noerdlingers. "In front of everybody. I can't believe this."

"Oh, no. Really," Miss Hand said. She shook her head, and pursed her lips. But she couldn't think of anything to say—no one could. Then she strode softly across the sand, and kissed Tom once, hard, on the mouth. She kissed my mother on both cheeks, and then did the same with me. Then she took a step backward. "It's great," she said firmly. "It's a great present. Your father's a lucky man."

"Well, *I'm* glad we have this boat," my mother interrupted, "even if nobody else is," and in a rush her social manners returned. "Hey, Noerdlingers," she cracked, her voice a moll's, "wanna buy a boat cheap?"

By dusk, the house had emptied out. The tide was low again, and the marsh exuded a worn, salty smell. The only sound in the house was the laboring hum of the dishwasher, playing to a sponged and deserted kitchen. After the birthday fiasco, my mother, Tom, Miss Hand, and I had gone out in the new boat. None of us, with the exception of Tom, were good sailors, but once we'd managed to get the sails up, it was fairly easy handling. My brother pushed us out a few feet, and then, shoving off with his sneaker, he took a flying leap over the seat and into the hold. With the four of us crammed in a boat designed to accommodate two or three, we made our way past the town landing and into the boatyard.

"Who knows what a spirit is?" my mother asked suddenly. She was sitting next to Tom, her lime slicker sleeves rolled up past her elbows.

"A spirit," Tom said. He swished the word around in his mouth, as though it were a new taste. "O.K., I give up, Mother. What is a spirit? Tell us."

"Who knows what happens when somebody's spirit is crushed?"

There was a silence, as the sloop furled forward on the rolls of a motorboat's wake, and a scalloping boat passed us on the left.

"He's not nice to you," Tom said.

"Oh, come on, now," my mother said. "He's your father."

Tom stared at her. "He's a prick."

"He's boring," he added. "God." Then, "He's *boring*."

"No," my mother said. "He's quiet. He's a quiet man. And he's fair—"

"So what does that have to do with anything?" I interrupted.

Nobody knew what to say. "You should have an affair," Tom said sharply. "Maybe you should marry Mr. Noerdlinger." Ordinarily, he disguised his annoyance toward my mother under a veneer of sweet indifference, but the soft sound of the choppy water dulled his inflections, and she took him literally.

"Nope. He's already married," my mother said. "To that cold, dull, spoiled, unimaginative witch."

We all pretended to be shocked, and, in fact, it did come as a shock to hear what my mother really thought about her. "Mom!" I said, stroking my index finger. "Shame! Shame!" Tom laughed nervously, but he looked pleased.

"Imagine," my mother said. "Imagine bringing a *sound machine* to the *ocean*. She came pounding on my door last night, stoned on whatever pills it is she pops, because the socket in her room didn't fit her *sound* machine. She has this portable sound machine that goes along with her wherever she goes. She can't sleep without it. She says. But what—" She paused. "Will you tell me *what* the point is of having a machine that makes *wave* sounds when the real thing is only a few hundred feet out your window? It goes to show you that money can buy a person a lot of things, but it can't buy you an imagination, or talent, or interesting—" She paused again. "*—ness.*"

On Sunday, Tom and Miss Hand, both wearing tennis whites, went off to the country club. The Noerdlingers had gone off sightseeing, and wouldn't be back until later that evening. It was as if the gift of isolation that the house provided had become a burden. After lunch, my father took a nap that stretched past two and then three o'clock, but suddenly he materialized in the kitchen, barefoot. He looked squashed, weightless and intent. He sat down on the stoop and began opening quahogs. With a hectoring motion, he scraped the small, black-handled knife under the watery pink, thumb rigid in the air, his palms and fingers juice-slick. Then, rather brutally, he slipped the blade under each clam, scooping the salty inside up and over onto itself. One after another, he laid the hectic-looking shells on a tray, and when I addressed him, he only grunted.

My brother and Miss Hand didn't get back until nine or so, just as my parents, Mr. Noerdlinger, and I—Mrs. Noerdlinger had gone to bed early, claiming the salt air had wiped her out—were finishing dinner. They joined us in the living room for dessert and coffee, and I could tell that they had stopped for a drink on the way home. "Tom gave me a tour of the town—" Miss Hand said.

"—and then we went to see the sunset at Conquit," Tom finished.

"Was it the most beautiful thing you've ever seen?" my mother said to her. My mother seemed to be in a vague, defiant mood that evening. There was an exquisiteness to her manner, a slowing down of motion mixed with what seemed to be a heightened self-regard. Whenever she gestured, which she did more than usual, her fingers seemed to hang in the air a moment longer than they did ordinarily, and she gazed down at them philosophically, as though they embodied ideas she was contemplating. "I think that we should all put on some music and *dance*," she said. "Who will dance?"

My father begged off—he rarely stayed up later than ten o'clock, a habit from the school week. She waved him away. "Fine. Go sleep. Go do what you have to do. Pleasant dreams." For a moment, he stood there in the doorway, blinking, looking confused, all eyes on him, and then slowly he brought his hand up to his forehead in a salute. Before he left, he told Tom and me to lock up, turn off all the lights—rules we knew by heart.

"Well, I'm staying up late and having fun," my mother said when he'd gone, as if there were any doubt that she would. Outside, a faint fusillade of thunder could be heard. My mother went around the room, reeling in the windows, and as the wind gathered strength, I could hear an occasional, abrasive scratching against the roof. "Let's all *dance*," my mother exclaimed. "Who'll be the d.j.?"

Mr. Noerdlinger, kneeling, began to riffle through a pile of old record albums while my mother stood at the door, gazing out at the floodlit lawn, and the black, wavering branches. "We need the rain," she said, as he placed a record on the turntable, and jazz began to crackle through the room. She turned suddenly toward him. "Since my husband has gone to bed, I'm afraid this girl has no one to dance with."

"Maybe you should go to bed, too," Tom said.

"Not on your life, Massa Tom!" she replied. "This li'l ol' girl wants to have some fun."

"Will you let me have this dance?" Mr. Noerdlinger said to her. "Since *my* wife has gone to bed?"

We—Tom, Miss Hand, and I—took seats on the couch, and watched as Mr. Noerdlinger took my mother by the hand, and led her out into the middle of the room.

A minute later, Miss Hand reached out to Tom, who'd been watching my mother and Mr. Noerdlinger with an expression of savage amusement.

He shook his head, his lips flat. "Come on," I heard Miss Hand say. "Please?"

Without waiting for an answer, she pulled him up onto his feet and towed him onto the floor. Standing opposite her, he looked embarrassed and uncertain, and then, questioningly, he positioned his right hand against her lower back.

"No, no, that's not right," I heard her say. "That's not the way you dance with a woman. Let me see if I remember. From a man's point of view." She took a step backward, appraising him thoroughly, and a moment later, she came toward him again. "Put your hand *here.* Farther down."

Her voice, soft and furtive, was a conspirator's. "If you put it there, I can get out from under you. You want to enclose me, sort of. Don't worry about hurting me, you won't." She shrugged dreamily, and reached for a sip of her wine. "Now take my other hand. My fingers. There. *There,* that's it."

They began to dance, but my attention was taken by Mr. Noerdlinger, who was holding my mother closely to his chest and executing an aggressive box step that seemed designed to lead her away from the other dancers and into the corners of the room. They were a glamorous, sophisticated couple, somebody's fabulous parents, mine but not mine. My mother's cheek was pressed against Mr. Noerdlinger's jacket, and her eyes were closed, but at one point she opened them, found me, and winked. Then she directed my glance toward Tom and Miss Hand, who were rocking, very gently, with their arms around each other. My mother seemed pleased by the sight of them, encouraging, even faintly superior.

When the song ended, my mother opened her eyes again, and everybody applauded. Mr. Noerdlinger flopped down heavily on the couch, and started fanning his face with one of the magazines from the table.

"Now, *that's* how you dance with a woman," Miss Hand said to Tom. She had a gentle, amused expression in her eyes.

In an instant, there was heat lightning over the tops of the pine trees, bright, sudden flashes that revealed, like a memory,

the day that had ended a few hours before. I stepped outside to the lawn for a better look, and then I heard Tom's voice. "In case anybody wants to know where we are," he said calmly, "Susan and I are going swimming."

"Susan?" I knew, of course, who Susan was. I was just surprised he was calling her that.

I watched as they crossed the lawn, heading toward the marsh and the bay. Although it was dark, I caught sight of a sudden spurt of yellow-orange that vanished, partially, inside a pair of cupped hands and I knew then that they were smoking a joint. I had the distinct impression that they'd done this before, and feeling a weakness in my stomach I could suddenly comprehend their shared, confused laughter when they'd come back from their walk the day before. I felt jealous, and for some reason betrayed, and I decided, after only a moment's hesitation, to follow them down to the beach. Leaving the house behind me, I traced their steps down the incline and into the marsh. It was then I felt the first rain—clipped, lukewarm, and sticky. Up ahead of me, Tom banged his knee on something and swore.

In the darkness—there was no moon, there were no stars, only black clouds—I could make out their figures, though I couldn't tell them apart except by their voices. I heard Miss Hand's voice; she had the joint in her hand, and it must have been burning her, because she shook out her fingers, and it fell onto the sand. "Where's the water? I can't see *anything*."

"Here." Then I heard shells crunching underfoot, and a limp, splashing sound, and I knew that Tom was wading into the surf.

Miss Hand giggled. "We should go skinny-dipping."

Tom said, "I already am." And then, softly, "It's nice."

Vaguely, I could make out Miss Hand's clothes sitting in a heap atop the overturned hull of a rowboat, but otherwise I heard only the light, turbulent flush of water as she waded into the bay, and Tom's low, slightly uncontrolled laugh, and then Miss Hand's voice, stern all of a sudden. "No," I heard her say.

"What? No what?"

My eyes, by now adjusting to the darkness, made her out, making her way back to the beach. "Oh, God," I heard her say.

"Come on back in, what's the matter?"

Miss Hand was reaching for her clothes now. "This is all wrong—"

"*What's* wrong? *What's* all wrong?" Tom repeated when she didn't answer. "Where you going?"

"Back to the house. I've had too much to drink. This is insane. I shouldn't have gotten into this." Her voice was cold, and for what seemed like whole minutes there was silence, and I could imagine Tom, standing there, naked, in the water, staring at her. Then there was more splashing, and his large shape moved in front of her, momentarily blocking what I could see.

I heard Miss Hand's voice, sharp and furious: "*Stop* it, Tom. *Quit* it."

"Oh, come on," he said.

"*Don't touch me.*"

Tom laughed, but his laughter had no friendliness. "Goddammit—"

"*Don't touch me*," she repeated, backing away.

He imitated her. "*Don't touch me.*" Then he said, earnestly, "D'you know there's a word for women like you?"

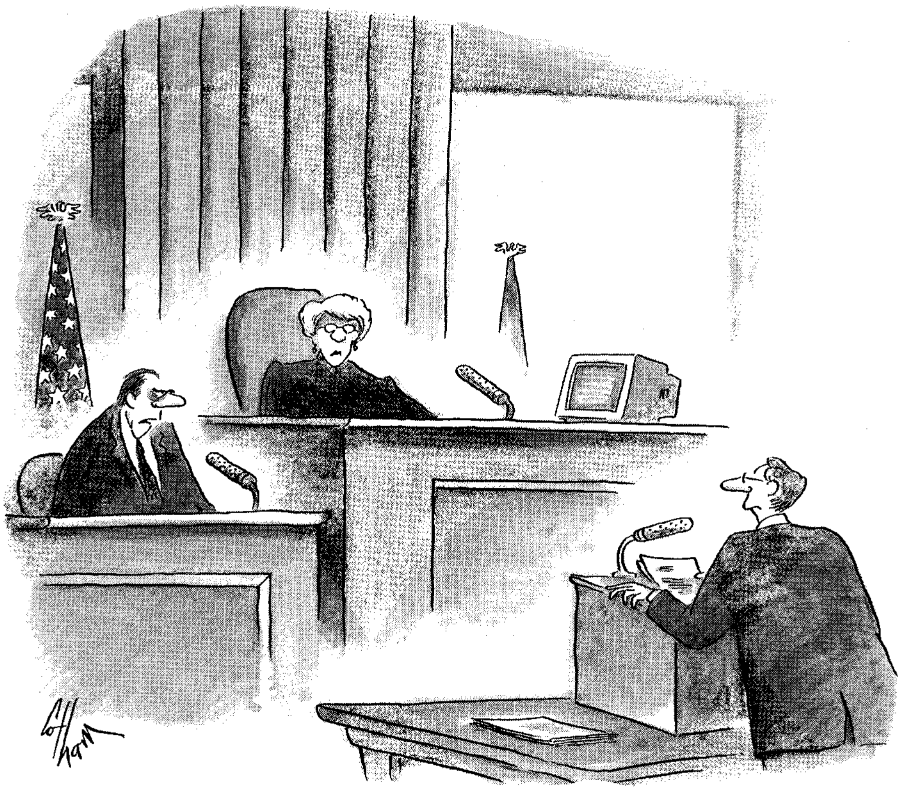
Her voice was quietly impatient. "You don't have to *prove* yourself to me, Tom."

His reply was cruel. "Get out of here, you little bitch," he said, but by then I was already on the marsh path, racing back toward the house, with my head down. Behind me, I could hear my brother shouting, "You're a *lousy* teacher! You're the worst teacher I ever had! We *hated* you! All of us *hated you!*"

I sprinted through a clearing that led to another beach path, then walked the hundred or so yards up a hill until I came to the white gates at the front of our property. The distant strip of white lights festooning our gazebo glittered through the damp black pines, and I kept those lights in my sight until I reached the driveway. By now, the rain was silent, and constant, and the faint wind off the water felt like a warning.

Then two figures emerged from behind the gazebo.

My mother was kissing Mr. Noerdlinger's mouth in a manner I can only describe as frantic. And he was kissing her back, though for that moment at least he was the one being kissed, and obviously liking it. My mother looked unkempt. There was mud on the sleeves of her dress, and on her collar. The blue sash of her dress had come untied, and it hung between her knees, practically touching the ground. Mr. Noerdlinger saw me first and, startled, pivoted away from my mother's arms, bending down suddenly, as if to tie his shoelace, and then, just as suddenly, straightening back up. He stood there, breathing shallowly. My mother gazed at me without recognition, and then, finally, her eyes lit up. It was as



"I took aim, pulled the trigger, and then, suddenly, shots rang out."

though I were the most interesting, original person she'd met in a long time, but she could not, for the life of her, remember my name.

"Johnnie, what are you doing skulking around here?" she finally said.

"I should ask you the same thing," I said, my voice sounding much braver than I was feeling. I remembered, suddenly, that I was still holding a wineglass, and I lowered it to my side, casually, as though I were a gunslinger.

"You scared us, darling," my mother said. "We thought you were a thief."

"An interloper," Mr. Noerdlinger added, and he gave me his best professional smile.

"What are *you* two doing?" I said.

"Oh—" My mother made a faint little half turn to Mr. Noerdlinger. "What *are* we doing?"

"We've been out walking in the rain," he replied. "Very pleasant indeed," he added.

"I love the smell of the lawn after it rains," my mother commented, pointlessly.

There was a silence. Then Mr. Noerdlinger gestured at a tree and said to my mother, "Is that one of the ones with the gypsy moths?," though when I glanced over to where he was looking, I could feel his gaze on my face like a hot light.

"Yes," my mother said, in a dignified voice, "it is."

For the first time, Mr. Noerdlinger noticed the wineglass in my hand. He pretended to splutter. "What's this? What's this?"

"Oh," my mother said casually, "we let them."

"The school year's in session for thirteen more days."

"We let them drink here at home. Better than in some parking lot somewhere. With police—"

"Well—" Mr. Noerdlinger was quiet for a moment. "—we won't say anything about it then. I can keep a secret, John. I know you can."

But I'd already turned back toward the house.

MY mother came looking for me later on that night. I could hear her going from room to room—through the living room, where Tom had fallen asleep on the sofa, past the big room on the second floor where my father and she slept; then softly down the stairs and into the basement. I heard her tentative knock, and when I didn't answer immediately the door opened and she came into the room, bright-haired and fragrant, her jewelry like stars against her dark skin, and with a fierce and tender animation in her eyes she moved aside the quilt and sat down at the end of my bed. Her eyes seemed to be blazing. "So," she said finally, "what are you doing here sitting alone in the dark?"

I didn't answer her. She seemed gaudy to me, suddenly, and irrelevant.

"John?" she persisted.

"Nothing," I said.

"No, what? Tell me."

"Nothing." Then, hotly, "You think I'm really dumb, don't you? You were *kissing* him. Admit it."

My mother stared at me, perplexed. "I was *what*? Kissing who? Or should I say 'whom'? What are you talking about?"

"Mr. Noerdlinger. You were *kissing* him," I repeated. "For all I know, you slept with the guy."

She laughed. "He and I were *talking*."

"You were kissing," I said. "You were *making out* with him."

Again, she laughed. It was the same thrilling, scornful laugh she'd aimed at Mrs. Noerdlinger at the dinner table, though now it was shaded for me, the greenhorn, who'd known neither urgency nor compassion in his life. "Don't be naïve," she said, rising and glancing at herself in the mirror over the dresser. "I don't even know what that expression means, except to know it's probably vulgar. Besides, I don't kiss anybody but your father."

"I *saw* you."

"You're making things up," she said abruptly. "I don't know why, but you are. And I don't want to hear another word about it."

"I *saw* you!"

She waved me away. "Something's got to be done about this basement," she said. "It's a disaster area. Tom—" and she stopped, and then was silent for a moment before resuming, eagerly. "Listen to the rain. *Smell.* Can you smell it? What a nice smell, when it rains."

She came over to the bed, and placed her hand against my cheek; her fingers were as cold as her eyes were warm. "You saw what you *wanted* to see, which is different from what actually happened." She hesitated. "You're lying a lot these days, sweetheart. Which concerns me. It must mean something's wrong. Don't cry," she pleaded suddenly. "Please don't cry, because if you cry, then *I'll* cry." ◆

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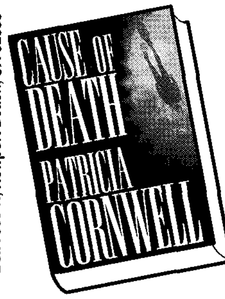

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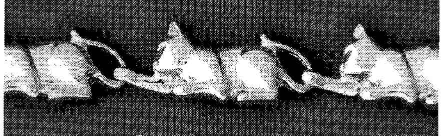

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A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE SHOCK OF THE TRUE

Crime and why we can't stop reading about it.

BY ALEX ROSS

“TRUE crime” is the name that has attached itself to journalistic and literary accounts of exceptional human ghastliness. The term became a standard publishing category in the nineteen-eighties, distinct from long-standing genres of mystery and crime literature. In its basic guise, true crime takes the form of those slim, brightly colored paperbacks sold in the finer airports and sleazier bookstores, with titles like “Toxic Love,” “Savage Vengeance,” and “The Eyeball Killer.” In more cultivated hands, it touches a thanatoid poetical note—“In Cold Blood,” “The Executioner's Song,” “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil.” The uncontested titan of the type is “Helter Skelter,” the life of Charles Manson as told by his prosecutor, which was reissued last year in a special twenty-fifth-anniversary edition. If, as Matthew Arnold boasted, culture aspires to reveal the best that has been thought and known in the world, true crime desires to reveal the worst.

The name is new, the genre is not. These books may look like so much scattered sediment on the contemporary plain, but they will soon form a neat geological layer, crushed over many older layers. Readers have been devouring hastily printed accounts of mayhem and disaster since the invention of the popular press. “There is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue, as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity,” Edmund Burke wrote in 1757. William Bolitho, the once widely read author of “Murder for Profit,” declared nearly two centuries later, “We have a need for the sight of life and death as for salt. We wage-slaves live continually in incompletion and inexplicability; we strain for a sight of stars and mud.” Violence has always been one of the chief indices by which any society measures its fall from grace or its hope for redemption. The first big event after man's expulsion from paradise was Cain's senseless bludgeoning of Abel.

Still, this dank little corner of the bookstore raises some fresh questions. How true is true crime? How and why are its particular truths chosen? The shock of the real is the main selling point: even the laziest true-crime hack, armed with evidence of stupefying acts, can outdo all the chic young writers and hip directors who think themselves daring for their gore. But facts, somehow, do not always suffice. These books freely re-create scenes witnessed by only the dead and the mad. They touch the border where fantasy turns to fact, where the unimaginable becomes trite. They generalize portentously from freak events. They invite fascination to overcome disgust: you want to put them down but can't. And, sometimes, they give people dangerous ideas. More than most cultural pursuits, true crime is very much at the mercy of its audience.

THE roots of true crime go back at least as far as Daniel Defoe, who in 1725 published a “True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the late Jonathan Wild; not made up of Fiction and Fable, but taken from his own Mouth, and Collected from Papers of his own Writing.” Wild was the long-reigning mastermind of criminal London, whose fame grew through the circulation of newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and songs: he passed into myth in “The Beggar's Opera.” But Defoe's “true and genuine account” mixed fact and fiction, despite all the vehement protestations of the title. Well into the next century, crime tended to serve other genres, particularly political satire, rather than hold interest in its own right. It was Thomas De Quincey, the brilliant and bizarre Romantic essayist best known for his “Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,” who liberated the form in his sequence of essays “On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts.”

At first, De Quincey's “On Murder” followed the conventions of high-minded satire. It imagined a Society of Connoisseurs in Murder, which appraised vicious acts according to strict aesthetic criteria. (The apparent target was Burke's treatise on “The Sublime and Beautiful,” which observed man's terror before the majesty of nature. If the monstrous in nature can assume philosophical grandeur, why not the monstrous in man?) But De Quincey found more to savor in the bare facts of favorite cases than his roundabout conceit allowed him to show. In an 1854 Postscript, he added a methodical, hypnotic narrative of various killings carried out by a yellow-haired sailor named John Williams. In those forty-odd pages, true crime blossomed. There is a cool sketch of the character of the villain, balancing his dandyish charm against an inner viciousness (“His eyes seemed frozen and glazed, as if their light were all converged upon some victim lurking in the far background”); there is a look into the doomed home of innocents (“[Marr] was a stout, fresh-colored young man of twenty-seven, in some slight degree uneasy from his commercial prospects, but still cheerful”); there is a heightening of suspense through close inspection of ominous detail (“The cry of *past one o'clock* . . . commencing a few seconds after one, lasted intermittingly for ten or thirteen minutes”).

At the climactic moment, De Quincey suddenly withdraws his omniscient gaze: “Let us leave the murderer alone with his victims. For fifty minutes let him work his pleasure. The front door, as we know, is now fastened against all help. Help there is none.” He then pieces together the scene of the crime through the wild gaze of a servant girl who had stepped out to buy oysters. The style is almost cinematic in its quick-cut juxtaposition of criminal and innocent points of view. Admittedly, the real-time narrative also includes some outlandish De Quinceyan touches: citations of Shelley and Wordsworth, baroque exclamations of horror, invocations of the sublime, and a delirious fantasy sequence in which Sailor Williams escapes his second crime, flees to America, and becomes

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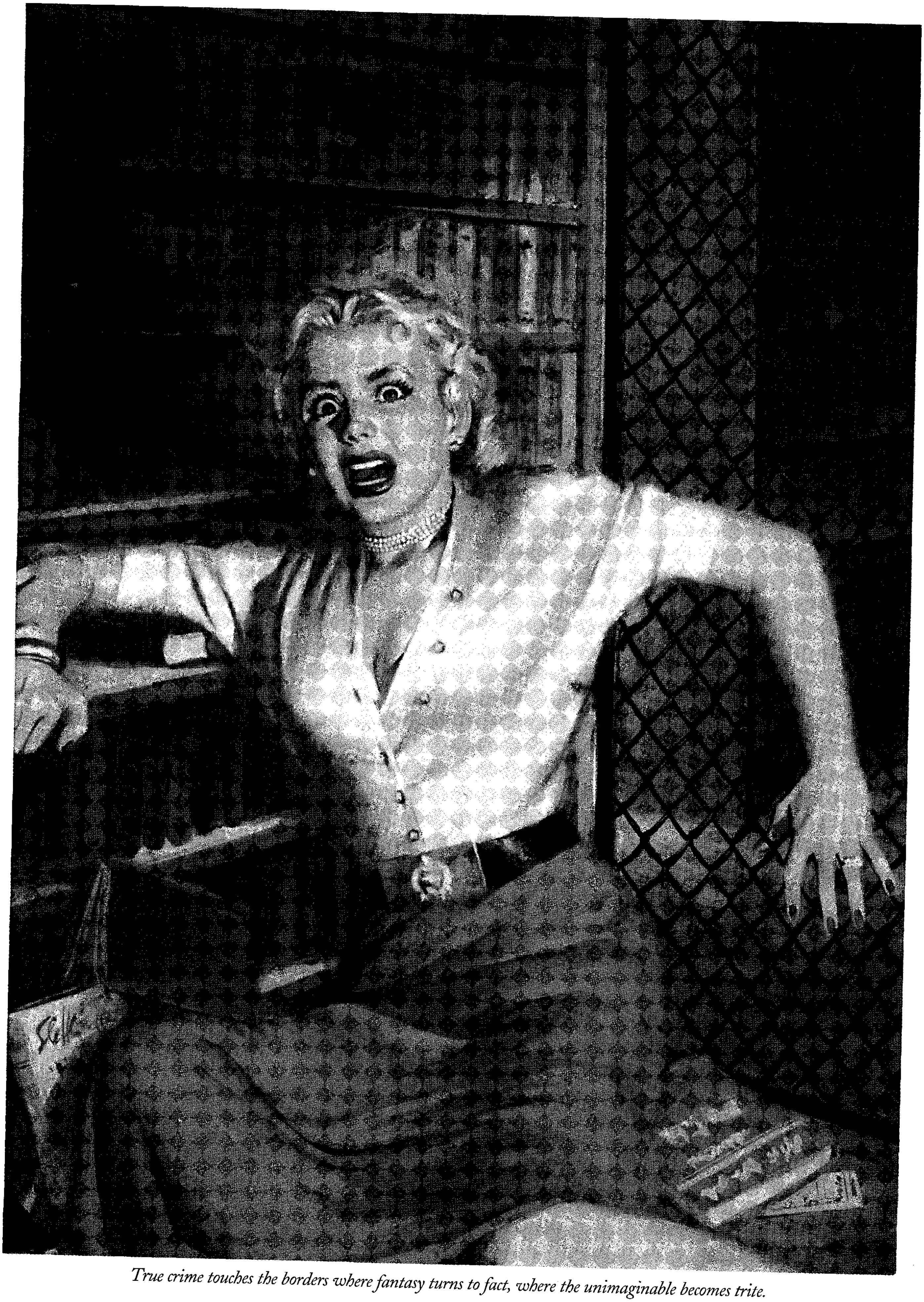
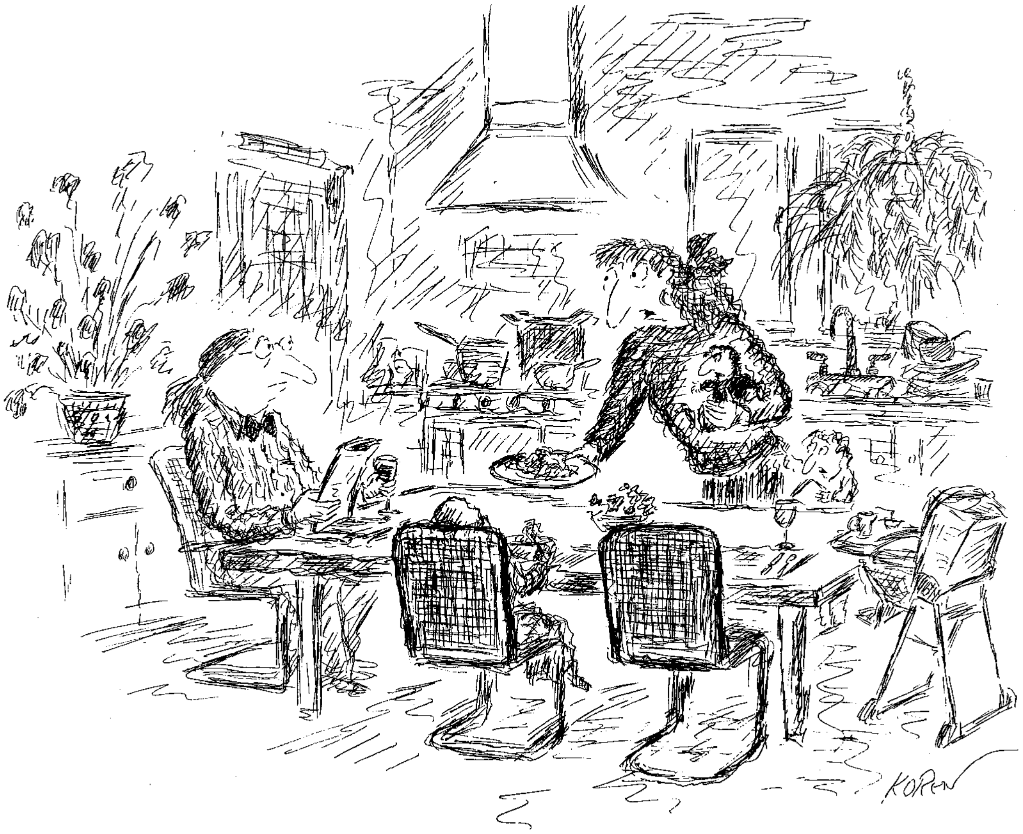


True crime touches the borders where fantasy turns to fact, where the unimaginable becomes trite.



"Despite my best efforts, you're still the man and I'm still the woman."

President of the United States. (But no, the poor man hesitates for ninety seconds and ends up hanging himself in jail.)

By the end of the nineteenth century, the establishment of police forces in London, New York, and other major cities had pushed crime rates—notably the rates for homicides—steadily down. But the advance of mass media created an ever-growing hunger for tales of gruesome crime: far-flung cases were marshalled to form something like a continuous procession of atrocities. The so-called Jack the Ripper murders, in the late eighteen-eighties, were an international sensation, launching a true-crime cottage industry that still thrives. Absolutely nothing was known of the man responsible; letters signed with the name "Jack the Ripper" were probably a sick hoax. What mattered most was the lurid consistency of the crimes: whoever committed them knew how to paint nightly horrors for the morning paper. The interplay between mass media and mass murder settled into an established routine in Victorian London.

Oscar Wilde's trial and humiliation, in 1895, intensified the public's interest in courtroom spectacles, but cases more brutal and common than Wilde's sated that interest in later years. A growing Anglo-American true-crime market absorbed titles like F. Tennyson Jesse's "Murder and Its Motives" (1924), Edmund Pearson's "Studies in Murder" (1924), and William Roughead's "Malice Domestic" (1928). Roughead, a Scots criminal historian, boasted a distinguished readership that included Joseph Conrad and Henry James. That these courtroom procedurals satisfied a particular kind of craving was borne out by nearly identical fan letters Roughead had received from his famous admirers: "I haven't sat down yet properly to the feast, but am looking forward to it. I know the taste of some of your dishes" (Conrad); "I devoured the tender Blandy [a female poisoner] in a single feast; I thank you most kindly for having anticipated so handsomely my appetite" (James).

William Bolitho's "Murder for Profit" (1926) surveys the field of violent crime from a loftier vantage point. This serial biography of five notorious murderers owes its extravagant, sometimes supercilious style to an older generation but also sounds rather modern in its weary suspicion of psychiatric nostrums. Bolitho was a South African journalist who earned modest fame in the twenties, before dying from appendicitis. His sardonic attacks on Fascism undercut some intellectuals' early admiration for Mussolini—notably Hemingway's. The criminal protagonists of "Murder for Profit" are painted with De Quinceyan relish, but there is also deadly scorn for the penitentiaries that bred them, the neighbors who overlooked them, the legal pedants who wrangled over their mental state, and the mob that applauded their ultimate destruction. The final chapter is a devastating account of the crimes and times of Fritz Haarmann, who killed several dozen adolescent boys in Weimar Germany while working as a police informer. Bolitho's apocalyptic vision of mass murder serving a murderous state is curiously prescient.

Such grandiose cynicism went out of fashion after the Second World War. A scary rise in the crime rate seemed to push writers toward a more earnest exploration of individual cases. "In Cold Blood," Truman Capote's prose reënactment of the random slaughter of a Kansas family, began a new wave in true crime: the book-length investigation of an archetypal tragedy, observed with a flat analytic gaze and reported in exhaustive detail. Two of Capote's techniques have been much imitated: first, the habit of factual embroiderment, which he justified by calling his book a "non-fiction novel"; second, the narrative of childhood trauma and discontent, which ultimately renders the two young killers as sympathetic subjects. Like Norman Mailer after him, Capote wanted to apply shocks of real-life violence while retaining the novelist's right to dissect the psyche. But the docudrama style, impressive in the hands of its originators, has had a dubious fallout in contemporary crime literature and tabloid television, where it often smacks of either poverty of invention or disrespect for the dead. Rhapsodies of criminal psychology, delving into shady, half-imagined mental zones, raise a similar discomfort. However sober-minded their medical sources, they carry a poisonous trace of fantasy and titillation.

"Helter Skelter," the perennial true-crime best-seller, is a peculiarly satisfying hybrid of the genre, because it mixes Capote's total immersion with Bolitho's lordly contempt. Vincent Bugliosi, the legendary Los Angeles district attorney who convicted Charles Manson, tells his own story with an unaffected swagger and treats what he did not see with scrupulous care. The result is a very deft fusion of solid storytelling and prosecutorial ire. But a different kind of doubt surfaces here: the book's case against Manson is too strong for its own good. Bugliosi faced something less than an open-and-shut case; he had to place Manson's spirit at the two murder scenes from which he had been absent in person. And so the jury was asked to consider Manson's hallucinogenic babblings as cold conspiratorial intent. "Helter Skelter," the Beatles' song about a children's playground slide, became the smoking gun in a vast plot to incite race war and anarchy. Bugliosi aggrandized a savage con man into the arch-conspirator of the age; Manson, naturally, admired him in return. The author deserves thanks for insuring that Manson will undoubtedly never leave jail, but the book that maintains his infamy also maintains his fame.

MOST true-crime books now flooding the shelves are simpler and stupider. Some of them carry on the nonfiction-novel techniques that Capote claimed to have pioneered. Others stick to journalistic reportage. The quality of the writing varies enormously, from the tensely stylish to the borderline moronic. If it seems as though a literary pursuit has devolved into a cheap industry, it should be remembered that much of this material has actually moved onward and upward from grisly police-news columns, detective magazines, and other instant literature. What follows is an unsystematic anatomy of the genre's current traits and tics, virtues and sins, absurdities and accidental truths.

Fatal Death. Titles speak volumes. Earlier in the century, true-crime titles still echoed the high facetious tone of De Quincey's "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts." William Roughead's popular crime anthologies were given titles like "Reprobates Reviewed," "Rascals Revived," and "Tales of the Criminous." Joe McGinniss's "Fatal Vision" (1983) started a fashion for sullen, solemn two-word formulas. Now true-crime titles seem to be pounded out by the same wordsmiths who baptize straight-to-video movies starring Corey Haim. The St. Martin's True Crime Library, easily identifiable by the bloody handprint on the spine, offers "Lethal Lolita," "Bad Blood," and "Unanswered Cries." One recent presentation brings you up to date on those two English boys who kidnapped and killed a toddler. David James Smith's book was originally published in England as "The Sleep of Reason." The heavy allusion to Rousseau ("childhood is the sleep of reason") was apparently considered too much for tender American minds, for they got "Beyond All Reason" in hardback and "Fatal Innocence" in paperback.

It was a dark and eerie night. True crime likes to zoom in slowly and incrementally on the fatal scene. "Helter Skelter" begins, "It was so quiet, one of the killers would later say, you could almost hear the sound of ice rattling in cocktail shakers in the homes way down the canyon." Tim Cahill's voyage inside the mind of John Wayne Gacy, "Buried Dreams," starts with this: "One of the neighbors was wakened from her sleep by screams in the night: faint, high-pitched screams that drifted across the neatly mowed lawns and seemed to come from the house beyond a hedge she could see from her back door." (The elegance of this sentence resides in the purring suburban blandness of its nouns, except the scream.) Jonathan Coleman's "Exit the Rainmaker," by contrast, begins in broad daylight: "It was the sort of fine spring morning when you feel the urge to hop into a red convertible, flip on the radio, and drive forever." (True crime does not always deal in horrific violence. "Rainmaker" is the story of a well-liked community-college president who one day simply vanishes from his life, mailing gnomic notes to his family and friends. He commits a sort of bloodless murder of himself, and moves to El Paso.)

Scenery of the crime. One major seduction of the genre is its surrounding décor, its societal bric-a-brac. Like a good episode of "Cops," these books provide vivid, unexpected cross-sections of daily American life. Violent death has a way of lighting up a workaday environment, setting its ordinariness in bold relief. (Edmund Burke observed that many people are drawn to London's glory only when it catches fire.) But the scene setter should be wary of giving out too much information. Coleman's story of the Rainmaker, after its bracing start, immediately gets lost in statistics: "It was a Wednesday, May 19, 1982. Twenty-five miles south of Washington, D.C., a tall man with china-blue eyes was preparing to leave his twenty-three-room Georgian house shortly before eight." Just because Coleman wrote it down in his little notebook doesn't mean that we need to read it. Jack Olsen's "Charmer," the tale of a man who picks up women in singles bars and kills them, contains this intoxicating evocation of a typical night out: "Women emitted clouds of pheromones while demurely nursing five-dollar drinks like Sex on the Beach, made of peach schnapps, vodka, cranberry and orange juice; Smith & Wesson, a blend of Kahlúa, Coke, vodka and cream; and Electric Watermelon, made of vodka, sweet-and-sour mix, 7-Up and the melon liqueur Midori." Only Bret Easton Ellis is allowed to write sentences like that.

The fiend in our midst. The invisibility of the higher class of killer—John Wayne Gacy, well-liked organizer of the Polish Day parade in Chicago; Charles Manson, wacky pal of L.A. rock stars—relies heavily on the blissful inattention of the general public. Amateur detectives, professional hysterics, and mindless crowds are always ready to run down scapegoats (the Polish Jew who was hounded in the Jack the Ripper case, for example), but they habitually overlook the lunatics next door. True crime is plentifully stocked with neighbors who hear gunshots and go back to sleep (Manson), accept a "bad meat" explanation for a terrible stench (Dahmer), smile good morning at someone carrying a bucket of blood downstairs (Haarmann), and share books on ominous subjects ("He borrowed my books on Ted Bundy and Charles Manson and didn't return them," complains the killer's roommate in "Charmer"). These all-unseeing, all-unknowing neighbors are often harshly judged by true-crime writers; Bolitho accuses them of "corporate stupidity," even of unconscious complicity in the crimes. Here, perhaps, he judges too much: after all, a sound relationship with one's neighbors depends on a careful balance of knowledge and ignorance, and the kind of mind that would readily believe in a serial killer living next door does not rest easily at night.

Victims. Every few days, someone covering the O. J. Simpson case would murmur, "Overlooked in all this is the other victim, Ron Goldman"; then, for seven-tenths of a second, we would see footage of Goldman modelling menswear or appearing as a contestant on "Studs." This had the effect of saying, "Let's take a moment to overlook Ron Goldman." All crime stories have trouble recovering respect for the dead. Brief biographical sketches of the victims, written to ease a guilty conscience and heighten suspense, do not suffice. William Bolitho, averse to all hypocrisy, openly derided his killers' targets, as in this telegraphic description of a Fritz Haarmann victim: "Wilhelm Apel, aged 16. A dreamy, romantic schoolboy. His father reproached him with cigarette-smoking; he did not come home." A new book by the prolific true-crime writer Jack Olsen indicates a recent trend toward sharpened sensitivity. His "Salt of the Earth" is a clumsily affecting nonfiction saga whose victims dominate the plot. Olsen writes of a family struggling to overcome the terrible legacy of violent crime, and he makes sure the murderous stranger who precipitates the principal catastrophe remains a dim, marginal presence. Set in bleak California and Pacific Northwest landscapes, the book has the makings of grand pathos. If only it didn't contain sentences like this: "The cronies were as close as twins and combined muscle and strength with hearts of mush."

What on earth were they thinking? One early voyage inside a killer's mind was George Crabbe's poem about the sadistic fisherman Peter Grimes, which attempted to show how "a man of feeling so dull should yet become insane, should be of so horrible a nature." The mental stumble from dullness into horror does not always generate great poetry, or even intelligible prose, but it remains one of the chief lures of true crime. Writers long to show not only the lurid particulars of a diseased mind but also the general type of mind inclined to murder: and so they help themselves to vague descriptive categories or "profiles" fashionable in criminal psychology. Tim Cahill's "Buried Dreams" wallows for many pages in John Wayne Gacy's suspiciously elaborate account of his own multiple-personality disorder. Even if it were genuine, the disorder would fail to explain why any one personality took the leap into violence. The search for a definite "criminal type" has advanced very little since the days of the criminologist Cesare Lombroso, who argued that madmen can be recognized by the shape of their skulls.

Detectives. These cases are often ones in which an unspectacular intellect has managed to elude capture by disposing of people no one cares about, like prostitutes or male hustlers. The killer is usually caught by accident, if at all, when a routine investigation stumbles upon horror. Nonetheless, authors make working-class heroes of the homicide detectives, cartoonishly antithetical to the monsters they track. "Albert worked with men who were very strong practising Christians," David James Smith writes of one police angel. "He was not obligated to go to work that Sunday but, Albert being Albert, it was the kind of thing he'd do." In Olsen's "Salt of the Earth," the detective Tom Pszonka is "on a personal crusade to jail every criminal in the Pacific Northwest," and has "already dispatched one with a single shot." (It's a fine marksman who can jail a criminal with a single shot.) Two other officers are, reassuringly, "family men with a special abhorrence of pedophiles."

The butler did it. A growing subgenre of true crime is devoted to the reopening of famous murder cases, recent or ancient: the murders ascribed to Richard III, the possible poisoning of Napoleon, even the circumstances surrounding the stabbing of Christopher Marlowe. Some of these writers avail themselves of apparent advances in the science of forensics. Hugh Thomas's "The Murder of Adolf Hitler" microscopically analyzes the dental records and photographed remains of Hitler, Eva Braun, and other Nazis. It concludes that Hitler was strangled by his valet, and that Eva escaped alive, leaving a corpse dressed up as her own, with an insertion of fake dental work. Some of the initial dental inferences seem plausible, but an elementary scientific principle has been ignored in the development of the final hypothesis: when several explanations seem to fit the facts, it is wise to choose the simplest, most elegant solution, and not one that is tortuous, counterintuitive, and hare-

MADISON AVENUE

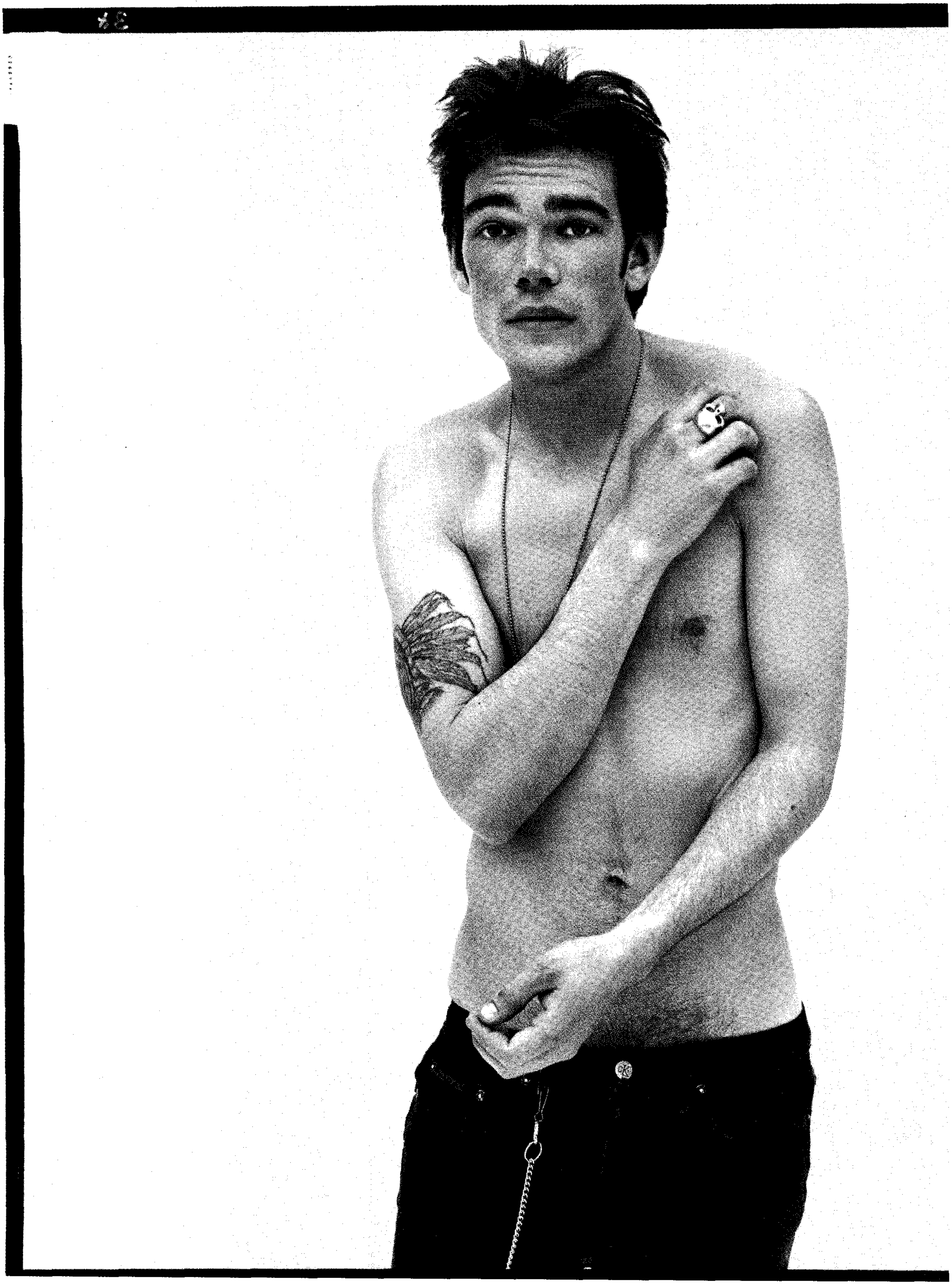
SCENT STUD

For now, Billy White is just one of the many models who are starting to show up in print ads for Calvin Klein's "cK be" fragrance—a thick-lipped, Indian-tattooed specimen in a gallery of attractive scruffs. Come September, though, the campaign will spill over to television, and viewers will hear White's droll, Jagger-inflected voice delivering fragments of semi-autobiographical titillation ("I was seeing two women at the same time," begins one bit, deadpan). At that point, White, a twenty-six-year-old tailor who works in a London silk shop and models only "to pay the rent," may find himself quitting his day job sooner than he imagines.

It remains to be seen whether or not White's street wit can persuade millions of wannabes to part with large sums of cash in exchange for small bottles of mass-produced aromatic fluid, but if the success of Klein's previous "cK one" campaign is any guide, why not? In any case, the "cK be" spots will avoid the kiddie-porn overtones of last year's dungaree debacle. Instead of a predatory off-camera voice probing underage-looking models, the "cK be" spots feature safely twenty-something models sharing their life stories, none of which seem quite as direct as Billy White's. "I've squatted. I've begged. I'm the real thing," he explains, in reference to his recent past.

White is both skeptical and amused about being fashion's imminent It Boy (besides modelling for "cK be," he'll soon be appearing in ads for Katharine Hamnett and in a big spread for *L'Uomo Vogue*). He says his sense of irony comes from growing up in a tough Hampshire household, in which "my dad believed Hitler was innocent, my sister was schizophrenic, and my brother thought he was John Lennon." And Billy himself? "I've always loved Johnny Rotten—his book is like the Koran to me. But I've tried to be like that and I'm not, really. I'm a Soho tailor who's being taken on a ride. Ya know what I mean?" —Brendan Lemon

PHOTOGRAPH
BY RICHARD AVEDON



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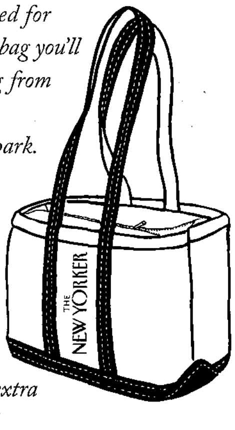

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brained. (Having speculated that Eva Braun escaped alive, Thomas shows amazingly little curiosity about what then became of her.) But the field has seen a recent counterrevolution: various representatives of a New Levelheadedness are announcing with great fanfare that the obvious is true. Vincent Bugliosi's latest prosecutorial best-seller, "Outrage," is a bombastic but thoroughly persuasive argument for O. J. Simpson's guilt. Bugliosi is also working on a book about the J.F.K. assassination, fingering Lee Harvey Oswald. Gerald Posner made the same daring case in "Case Closed," while Jim Fisher once again convicted Bruno Hauptmann in "The Lindbergh Case."

Young-adult true crime. Another subgenre of true crime links up with the punkish subculture of aestheticized violence—the friendly folks who have given us coffee-table books of autopsy photographs, exhibitions of paintings by John Wayne Gacy, serial-killer trading cards, Amok Books in Los Angeles, certain novels of Bret Easton Ellis and Dennis Cooper, a Manson composition sung by Axl Rose, the pretentious gore of movies like "Seven," and so on. Though this brand of murder chic worries many, it usually amounts to little more than an adolescent urge to consternate the elders. One undelightful release from St. Martin's Press explores the world of the Wisconsin killer Ed Gein, who was the inspiration for "Psycho" and "The Silence of the Lambs." An address for the Ed Gein Fan Club's merchandising department is appended in the back, along with an annotated rock-and-roll discography. The author writes sunnily of one Gein-influenced band: "Macabre are so monomaniacally obsessed with death, so cartoonishly nihilistic, you just know they've got to be having fun."

Books don't kill people, readers do. The question of a cultural incentive to murder, brought to full boil by Bob Dole last summer, has been simmering for centuries. Gilles de Rais, a comrade of Joan of Arc's who went mad and turned his castle into a slaughterhouse of kidnapped children, read Suetonius's "Twelve Caesars" and took inspiration from the bloody experiments of Caligula. It seems that some crimes are so ghastly that we can hardly conceive of people inventing them out of thin air, and conclude that they must have gotten their ideas from somewhere. The English had a debate on the subject of evil books thirty years ago, at the time of the still infamous Moors murders. Here there was little question that the particularly horrid Ian Brady, killer of three, had made a close study of some works in his library—most notably "Justine," by the Marquis de Sade. He was also an avid filmgoer, and styled himself after Harry Lime in "The Third Man." Conservatives contemplated banning "Justine" but not "The Third Man."

Bully pulpit. The lust to kill is often accompanied by an urge to use the media as a captive audience for eccentric intellectual and religious pronouncements. The Unabomber is only the most recent and verbose example. But the question of a murderer's oratory acquires a very different significance when words themselves become the weapon. Like Professor Moriarty, and like the killer in Agatha Christie's "Curtain," Charles Manson talked others into killing for him. The problem of homicidal speech is also at the core of the case of Joe Hunt, the mastermind of the Billionaire Boys Club. As a huge, mesmerizing new book by Randall Sullivan ("The Price of Experience") makes clear, Hunt is a peculiarly odious phenomenon: a sleek amoralist who convinced his rich, feckless preppie pals to slide from financial scams into cold-blooded murder under the spell of sub-Nietzschean philosophizing. He was not so clever as to avoid some obvious mistakes—he drafted a plan for the perfect crime, then left it at the scene—but he also managed to get all the charges in his second murder trial dismissed. Conducting his own defense, he stumped lawyers and charmed jurors. In some ways he is worse than Dahmer or Bundy, for his corruption is still spreading.

Why do they write this stuff? Ostentatiously, true-crime writers suppress fears that their work reveals a fundamentally morbid frame of mind. Robert Ressler, the F.B.I. psychologist who coined the phrase "serial killer," gives his memoirs the ambitious title "Whoever Fights Monsters," alluding to Nietzsche's famous quip "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster." Needless to say, Ressler lets no abyss look into him. On this same question, Emlyn Williams, a chronicler of the Moors murders, defensively asks, "Who expects savor from a story of noisome evil?" No right-thinking person, except maybe Henry James. "The proper study of mankind is man," Williams ventures further. "And man cannot be ignored because he has become vile. Woman neither." The Ripper expert Philip Sugden hears imaginary voices wondering why he has devoted his life to a destroyer of women. He answers majestically, "Some would have it that those who read or write about the murders are misogynists. I am not a misogynist. Nor, for that matter, is any serious student of the case personally known to me." Well, there you have it! Whether we admit it or not, our motives for reading this material and their motives for writing it are murky and complex. Whoever fights monsters should take care not to turn into a charlatan.

IN the end, true crime reveals few useful truths about violence in society. Street crime in the inner city and minority neighborhoods, which accounts for most of the steep rise in homicide rates during the past three decades, figures nowhere in these books. It is true that the isolated, spectacular outbursts of suburban psychosis they like to depict are certifiably on the rise, according to sober statistical studies. But the numbers remain negligible next to the anonymous mass of urban homicides. Serial killers, pedophiles, and the like are the suburbs' heavily overworked bogeymen. We choose to pay attention to them because of their quality, not their quantity. It has often been observed that certain élite criminals develop a close, electric relationship with the media. Peter Kürten, the Vampire of Düsseldorf, told a crowd of journalists after his capture in 1930, "The sensational reports in certain scandal sheets turned me into the man who stands before you today." Manson likes to say the same thing, and in your heart you know he's right.

Is it all evidence of a society gone mad and plunging toward chaos? Perhaps instead it is evidence of a society more and more terminally bored, coddled and protected from real threat, distant from living death. True-crime mayhem is perhaps a lateral reorganization, a consolidation, a downsizing of evil. Never in the history of the great white American suburb has so much murder been committed for so many by so few. The phenomenon is even more visible in England, which has long had astonishingly low homicide rates and astonishingly rich annals of multiple murder. True-crime books are, perhaps, evidence not of growing viciousness but of growing pacifism, of a progressively more relaxed national brain, which needs progressively bigger shocks to seize its attention. The shocks are not events, nor are they media pseudo-events; they are what the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard calls occurrences—episodes to contradict the deepening suspicion that nothing is actually happening. Occurrences serve to enliven true crime, real life, and fake art. They explode across the screen of one of Quentin Tarantino's movies in order to contradict the suspicion that the actors are merely chattering about old TV shows. Tragedy is comedy plus blood. Violence as art is a last-ditch attempt at the Sublime.

Burke saw it coming. "Chuse a day," he wrote, more than two centuries ago, "on which to represent the most sublime and affecting tragedy we have; appoint the most favourite actors; spare no cost upon the scenes and decorations; unite the greatest efforts of poetry, painting and music; and when you have collected your audience, just at the moment when their minds are erect with expectation, let it be reported that a state criminal of high rank is on the point of being executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of the real sympathy." True-crime writers endlessly restage that old scene of the public hanging. Their nobler impulse is to insist on the full, world-wrecking reality of violence, the multiple consequences of actions, the fallout of fantasy. But they are caught in a nasty paradox: to the degree that they stay true to their subject, they transcribe a murderer's vision of the world. Notwithstanding all moralistic protests, they have given up the moral advantage. They cannot quite control the sympathy of the milling crowd, which might lie with the executed or with the executioner. They promise the truth, the whole truth: very well, so help us God. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

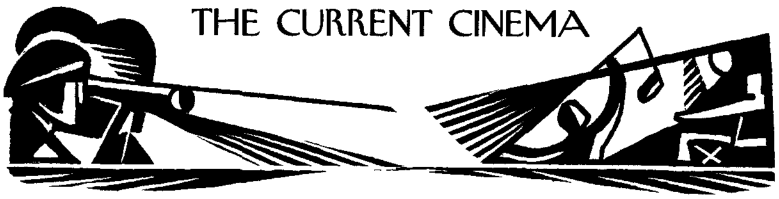
"WORSE THAN SLAVERY," by David M. Oshinsky (Free Press; $25). Under slavery, Mississippi's prisons were home to white inmates, since black crimes were usually punished on the plantation. That changed with emancipation, and in predominantly black Mississippi white fear led to draconian law-enforcement measures and epidemics of lynchings. Like other states, Mississippi tried convict leasing, but the appalling mortality rates among leased workers, together with protests from free (white) workers that the practice depressed their wages, led to a search for new solutions. Parchman Farm, begun in 1904, was Mississippi's answer: twenty thousand acres of rich Delta soil was turned into a penal farm at which mostly black inmates chopped cotton amid dismal conditions. Parchman became a sinkhole of sadism and violence, ignored because the farm turned a profit, and it continued nearly unchanged into the nineteen-seventies. Oshinsky's beautifully constructed narrative brings to vivid life one of the most shameful chapters in American history.

LUSH LIFE, by David Hajdu (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27.50). In 1939, when Billy Strayhorn, a young pianist and composer, was invited to visit Duke Ellington in Harlem, he put together a tune to mark the occasion: "Take the 'A' Train." That tune became the Ellington Orchestra's theme, and began a collaboration that sustained both musicians throughout their interwoven careers. Hajdu invests his biography of Strayhorn with the kind of sensitivity and clarity which is the mark of his subject's best work, and shows that Strayhorn managed to thrive in Ellington's considerable shadow; still, seeing much of the credit for his efforts go to his mentor did take its toll. The elegant, elf-like, openly gay Strayhorn—as comfortable discussing Shakespeare as stirring a pot of beans for his many friends—took to drink, thus accelerating the end, in 1967, to a remarkable, lush life.

ROUGH MUSIC, by Deborah Digges (Knopf; $20). Many of the poems in this outstanding collection are set at the end of summer—an appropriate moment, as the lyrics together chart a course for letting go: of grown children, of parents, of old lovers, and of a younger, passionate self. Digges's new verse is at times rowdy and elemental, its music that of a Bruegelesque romp, open to ecstasy and wild surrender. The book's final, emblematic poem describes a dying hamster who, "in some last instinct which merely parallels desire, / wanted it all, wanted more, which is to be alive."

SCRAMBLED EGGS & WHISKEY, by Hayden Carruth (Copper Canyon; $14). Carruth, seventy-five this year, has published thirty books. This is a poet whose virtuosity has often resembled the precision of pure math, a way of ordering a world where "Truly we are / the wise animals. Just not wise enough." Sensuality and easeful death remain his later concerns, and these new poems linger tenderly on their subjects with the poise of Horace. That love and irony and poetry persevere even as the body fails occasions the grace of this masterly collection.

THE CURRENT CINEMA



ALL THAT JAZZ

A Robert Altman riff, and a glowing biopic of Jean Michel Basquiat.

BY ANTHONY LANE

“Kansas City” begins in gloom. Not the excitable, guilt-deepening gloom of film noir but a dull, damp, end-of-day gloom—the kind of weather in which most people slouch home from work. A woman gets out of a car and rings at the door of a house: no music plays on the soundtrack; nothing looks ready to happen. Yet spooling out from this supremely drab scene comes a whole string of happenings, starting with a kidnap and ending with a kill. All of which is a way of saying that the director of “Kansas City” is Robert Altman. We have seen that gloom before: it enveloped the road race between friends in Altman’s “Thieves Like Us”; it brought their headlights on and led to a crash and a love affair. No other filmmaker wraps his movies in a such a thick texture, or puts such enduring—and unfashionable—trust in the patience of his viewers. Altman doesn’t slap his stories in your face; he allows them to fade into view through difficult light, and it’s often some time before we can work out who is who or what on earth is going on.

The who at the start of “Kansas City” is a woman known as Blondie (Jennifer Jason Leigh); her nickname stems from an obsessive urge to transform herself into Jean Harlow—a very Jennifer Jason Leigh thing to do, I feel. The year is 1934, two years earlier than the setting of “Thieves Like Us,” and Blondie is fooling her way into the Kansas City household of Henry Stilton (Michael Murphy), an adviser to President Roosevelt. Stilton is elsewhere, on his way to Washington, but his wife, Carolyn (Miranda Richardson), is at home, and she’s desperate for her regular fix of laudanum. Blondie provides it, then hustles her out into the car; the deal is that Stilton won’t get Carolyn back until Blondie gets her husband back. His name is Johnny (Dermot Mulroney), and he has landed himself in trouble by putting on blackface and robbing an eminent gambler, who was en route to some serious losses at the Hey Hey Club; not surprisingly, the owner of the club, Seldom Seen (Harry Belafonte), is richly unamused by this insult to his business. He has Johnny tracked down and brought in for heavy questioning. A leading white politician, in short, is being blackmailed to apply leverage to a senior black gangster. Oh, and there’s a city election coming up the next day. Anything else you want to know?

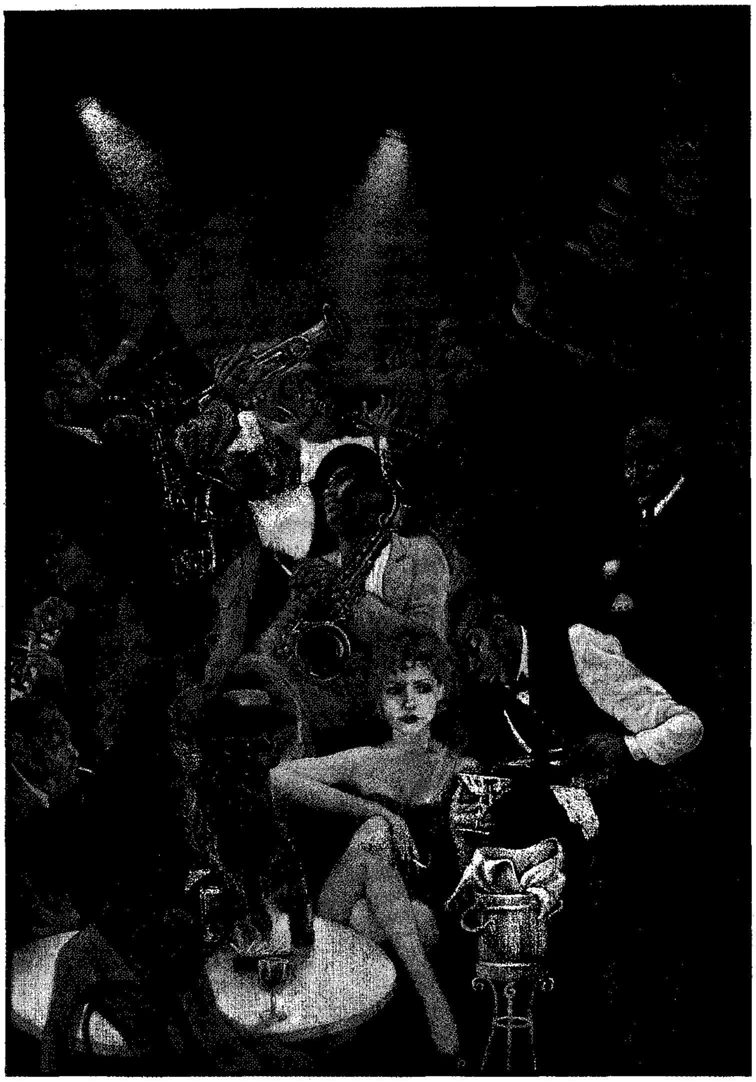
I didn’t really believe much of this, but there’s no doubting the skill with which Altman, who co-wrote the script with Frank Barhydt, zooms back and forth between dumb personal grievances and major-league power play. “Kansas City” marks the reappearance of the weird, democratic fatalism that shadowed “Nashville” and “Short Cuts”—movies that watched individuals touch off disaster, as if in mockery of the old Frank Capra principle that a single good conscience could improve the world. Whether you buy into the Altman doominess doesn’t matter; the narrative of “Kansas City” may be rigged, but somehow the picture smells authentic. The nap and the rub of the clothes feel right, and the electioneering bullies who ship illegal voters in from out of town ring horribly true. Altman seems more at ease with period movies than most of his fellow-directors; he doesn’t freeze up at the prospect of the past—if anything, as he proved in “McCabe and Mrs. Miller,” he likes to relax into the rhythm of another time. In the case of “Kansas City,” that means jazz.

At the hub of the movie is a sequence that is cooler than anything Altman has shot in years: the reconstruction of a celebrated saxophone contest that took place in Kansas City between Lester Young (Joshua Redman) and Coleman Hawkins (Craig Handy). By the end, both men are flying, and it’s all that Altman can do to keep pace, cutting swiftly and unobtrusively between them. It’s embarrassing that the most dramatic clash in the whole picture has nothing to do with the central characters; you begin to sense that Altman’s documentary instincts are leading the charge here, and that his own memories of the jazz clubs, where he hung out as a teen-ager, are too punchy and immediate to be boxed into the rather absurd plot of “Kansas City.” The only actor who seems up to the challenge is Harry Belafonte: he picks up his role and conjures a riff of his own. With his fighter’s shoulders, the husk in his voice, and his ability to race from whimsical to scary without changing gear, Belafonte is skirting Brando territory and doing it in style; I especially admired the controlled delicacy with which he scores cocaine, like a Regency dandy taking snuff.

So how come “Kansas City” doesn’t work? What can go wrong in a movie of such mellowness and flair? The answer, unfortunately, lies with Miranda Richardson and Jennifer Jason Leigh; it must have taken a particular sort of courage on Altman’s part to cast the two most mannered actresses now working in pictures. Up against someone more placid or voluptuous, one of them might have been great; together, they’re almost unwatchable. Always one of our leading frowners, Jennifer Jason Leigh is fast becoming possessed by her own scowl, and however much laudanum she gives Miranda Richardson it’s never quite enough. They are inseparable for most of the film, and the idea is that the low-life broad should bond, if not actually trade souls, with the highfalutin lady. In the event, all they can manage is a pooling of neuroses; “Kansas City” is, in the worst sense, nail-biting stuff. Why couldn’t someone kidnap the two leading ladies and leave the movie open for the boys at the Hey Hey Club?

“Basquiat” is a small, funny, rather sweet-tempered film about an artist. Nothing wrong with that, of course, except that it’s directed by Julian Schnabel. You might think that if Schnabel was determined to make a movie he could at least make a bearish, crockery-smashing kind of movie, a companion piece to the grandiose paintings that he produced in the nineteen-eighties. Instead, he behaves himself.

Set in New York, the story is a classic rise-and-fall number—the dramatization of a life that felt nicely plotted to begin with. Jean Michel Basquiat (played onscreen by Jeffrey Wright) was a young black artist of Haitian descent who spent the eighties, a decade disguised as a launchpad, rocketing from unknown to known; he hit legendary by dying from a heroin overdose, in 1988, at the age of twenty-seven. As far as the dealers and some of the critics were concerned, that capped it: the beautiful boy who crashes and burns must by definition be a genius. Any notion that the movie is going to depart from this version of events is scotched by the fantastical sequence that punctuates the opening credits: as an immaculate young child, Basquiat is led by his mother into a vacant gallery, where he stares up at Picasso's "Guernica." His mother gazes fondly down at him and sees that a crown of burning gold has appeared on his head. The message is clear: Jean Michel will inherit the kingdom from Picasso. Either that or he just set fire to his hair.



From the neurotic to the cool: Jennifer Jason Leigh and Harry Belafonte.

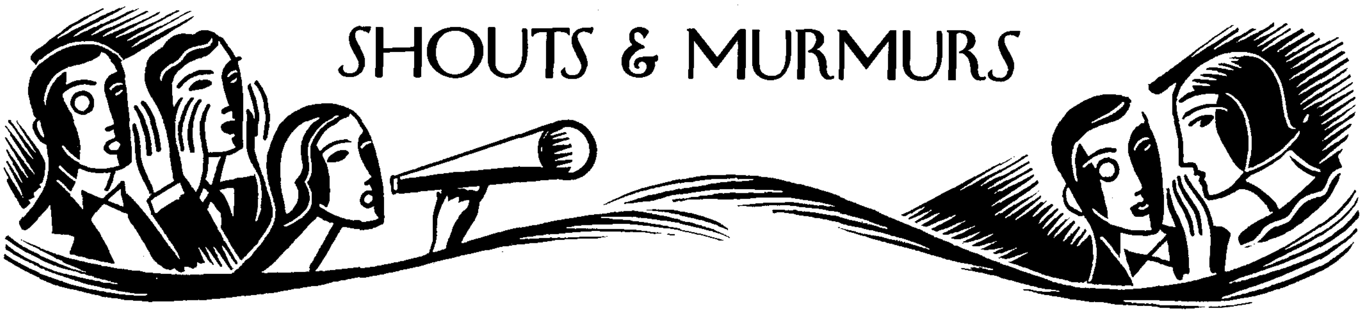
PATRICK D. MILBOURN

This is such flamboyant nonsense, both as cinema and as art history, that the most comfortable response is to settle back and enjoy it as high camp. The silliness of the film, in fact, is much easier to live with than its attempts to slip Basquiat in through the back door of the pantheon. I squirmed in my seat when, early on, a solemn voice-over repeatedly intoned the name of van Gogh (it does Basquiat no favors to mention him in the same breath), and when one fellow-painter, a Schnabelish big shot named Albert Milo (Gary Oldman), reassured our hero that "your audience hasn't even been born yet." Wrong. His audience is busy writing checks. The people who clamored for Basquiat through the Reagan years—and were thus perfectly placed to push his cash value ahead of his worth as an artist without noticing the difference—are the source of much amusement in the movie, most of it intentional. No film that casts David Bowie as Andy Warhol and Dennis Hopper as his dealer Bruno Bischofberger can be said to take itself altogether seriously. Bowie borrowed Warhol's wig and spectacles for the movie, and succeeds magnificently in resembling David Bowie wearing a Warhol wig. But he gives off the perfect unsexed vacuity ("Hey, we could go to Pittsburgh!"), while Hopper wrinkles his brow and glares at paintings on a wall like a torturer sizing up the bone strength of his victims.

"Basquiat" is wonderfully cast, a forest of climbers and freaks; it's the kind of movie where Christopher Walken counts as normal. He plays an interviewer who quizzes Basquiat about his background, fully aware that the graffiti-scrawling bum is in fact the son of a middle-class accountant. The artist ducks the question, as does the entire film: Schnabel kicks off with Basquiat crawling out from his resting place in a cardboard box and never looks back—never pauses to wonder whether the spirit of bohemia could really have survived unadulterated, or unfaked, in the SoHo of the nineteen-eighties. Finding Jeffrey Wright for the lead role was an inspired move; he's such a honey, so hesitant and pleading, that you can almost forgive Basquiat for shouting at his lover, Gina (a gorgeous performance from Claire Forlani). Even when he befriends Warhol and uses Andy's Gold Card to buy three thousand dollars' worth of caviar, you think, Who could say no to this guy? Bring on the blinis!

The only shocking thing about "Basquiat" is how prosaic it looks—dare I say, how pretty. Images of surfers ride the sky behind city blocks; the artist bicycles in bliss through green summer air; the soundtrack—easily the best of this year, culled from Basquiat's own tastes—seduces with bursts of Verdi and Tom Waits. Needless to say, the laborious business of making art is quickened by jump cuts: the sight of Basquiat battling with a huge canvas on the floor of his studio is like the famous footage of Jackson Pollock at work on a drip painting, only less cool by several hundred degrees. The best film ever made about an artist is Maurice Pialat's "Van Gogh"—an anti-legend movie, all about a tetchy, disagreeably driven individual who just happened to be a great painter. Schnabel goes in the opposite direction: the more he insists on the extraordinary intensity of Basquiat's life, and of what I suppose we must call his personality, the more the paintings dwindle into the ordinary. "Wanna buy some ignorant art?" Jean Michel asks Warhol when they first meet. "Basquiat" knows a little more than that, but not much. ◆

SHOUTS & MURMURS



PEROT ACCEPTANCE SPEECH LEAKED

BY BRUCE McCALL

Now, somebody was up on my roof the other night with a ray gun trying to dematerialize my dog. See, some folks don't cotton to a person telling it like it is. Well, that's just fine and dandy. So I'm quitting this campaign right now.

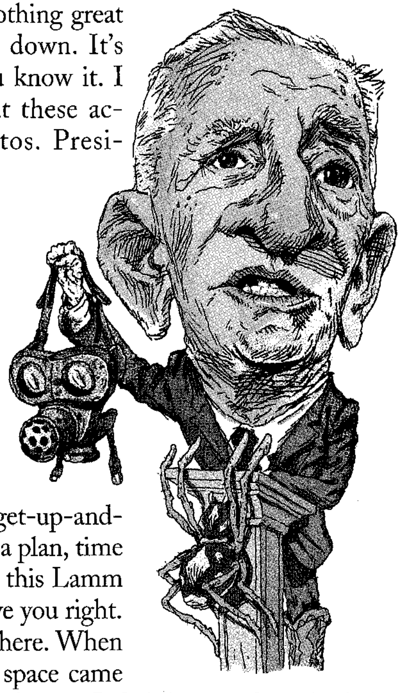
But then lots of you folks came a long ways to be here, am I right? So I'm back in it, and they'll just have to like it or lump it.

We got ourselves a real five-alarm mess up in Washington when somebody puts itching powder in your pajamas every night. Am I right? But that's O.K. Just another example of what I mean about trying to change things. Anybody here ever try frying a striped bass in a blizzard? You know what I'm talking about then.

But, folks, it's simple. First thing, cut out the Vice-President. Useless as pantaloons on a steer. Here, in this chart, you see? Saves twenty-eight billion dollars off the national budget. Now, you put that twenty-eight billion in mink ranching, sell the pelts at a dollar under fair-market value to those foreigners, and—now, this is what the politicians just don't get—use the mink manure for fertilizing the cantaloupe fields you put in next door. Just plain common sense. For one, look here: trade deficit turns into a surplus by Year Three. Two, full employment from the cantaloupe picking. And you still get enough left over for everybody in this country to have his own twenty-four-hour-a-day home-surveillance system.

Now, just before I turn down your nomination—thanks a lot, but no thanks, I don't need any Stealth Bombers following my wife's garden-club van—see this big one here, this here's a tax chart. Average taxpayer's got six chili peppers, gives five to the government, how many's he got left? Three, because he holds two of 'em back. Hides 'em under a tarp in his pickup. O.K., you see what happens to the budget? It's so simple. Multiply the value of those eight hundred million chili peppers by the wage-price index, subtract shipping and handling, nobody pays a thin dime in taxes until the year 2009. Or, put it on your Visa.

Why is everybody so consarned lazy in this country today? No secret: they sit down too much. Nothing great ever happened sitting down. It's just scientific fact. You know it. I know it. Look here at these actual undoctored photos. Presidents of the United States of America sitting on their duffs. And you wonder why nothing ever gets done in Washington. It's just plain straight thinking. Take away the bureaucrats' desks. No desk in my Oval Office, I flat guarantee it. All you need to succeed is get-up-and-go. Now that I laid out a plan, time for *me* to go. You want this Lamm fella, he's all yours. Serve you right.



But one other thing here. When those folks from outer space came and abducted my gardener, I didn't go complaining to some government bureau or federal department. Might as well try catchin' tumbleweed with an eggbeater. What'd I do? Again, so simple—hired another gardener. You see my point? I didn't change my mind—the facts shifted. Which is why I've decided to reënter the campaign and fight this thing to the finish. That's the American way.

Now, about this crime business. Crime would be as rare as a Picasso in Lubbock if we just bellied up to the problem instead of all these blue-ribbon panels and Presidential commissions—every one of 'em as useless as a bullhorn in a mausoleum. I can see it, you can see it, why can't those folks in Washington see it? "Crime" spelled backward is "emirc." Everybody start calling crime "emirc." Lemme hear you all say it. Pretty soon you got no such thing as crime. No criminals, either, because now they're "lanimircs."

Why should a citizen keep beating his brains out explaining all this when the media keeps saying such dang fool things about him? Somebody else will have to carry on. That Lamm fella, I hear he's got a hide on him thicker than the gravy on Uncle Dud's shortcake. Head included.

But now I'd like to ask you folks to file out of here real quiet, keep nice and calm. Those giant spiders don't bite, just a little sting is all. One last thing. I know you're all F.B.I. agents, but that's just dandy with me. Hear that, C.I.A.? Here's my idea—cut out the C.I.A. Make everybody a U.S. marshal instead. Plain common sense. And this citizen doesn't need any fancy press releases or some big, slick campaign organization to say I accept your nomination. But, see, this is where the hog runs out of acorns. So you all come right back, sit down, all of you. I have an announcement to make. ◆

JOHN CUNEO

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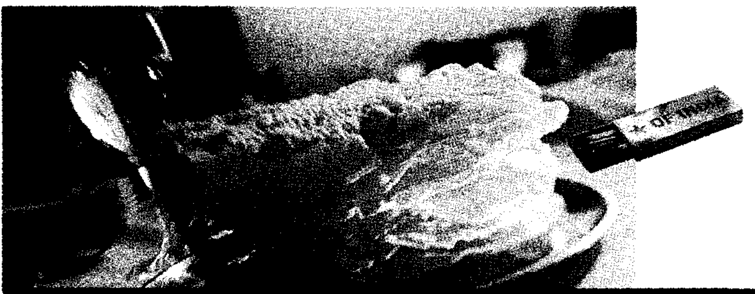

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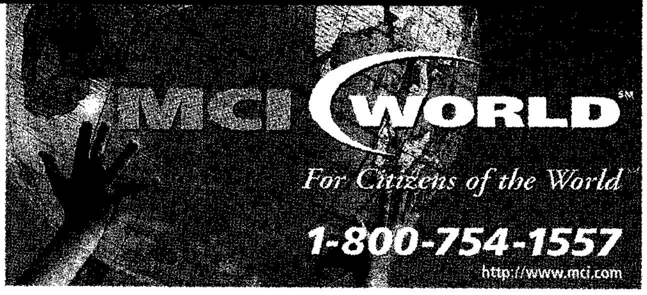

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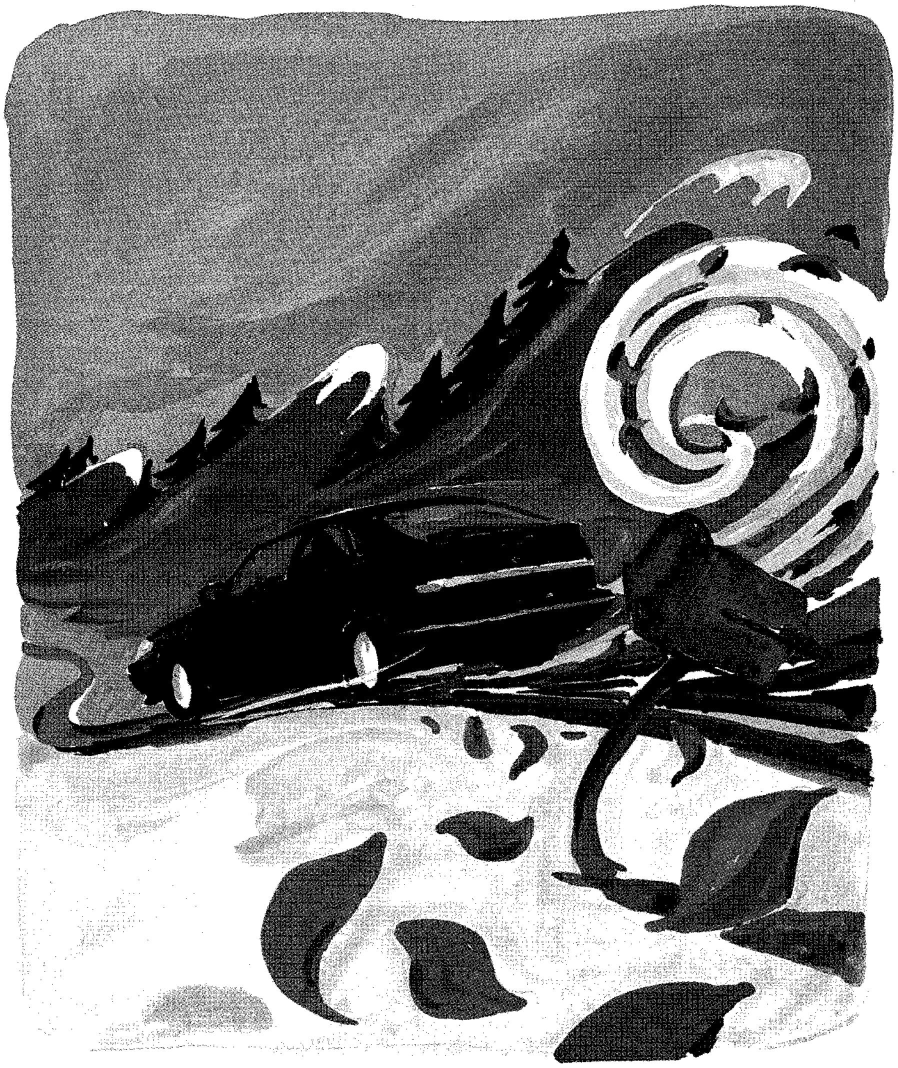

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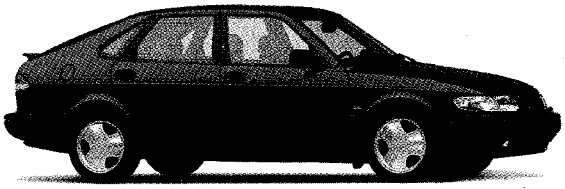

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